

Talcott sets new course with agile, modern IT infrastructure

By migrating 100 apps to the cloud in 10 months with zero disruption, the life insurance and annuity company readies for market leadership.



At a glance

Industry
Insurance

Location
United States

Products and services
Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI)
Oracle Exadata Database Service

Challenge
Talcott Resolution had 20 months to stand up a new organization and migrate its production portfolio—100 custom applications and 50 databases—from its former parent’s data center to the cloud.

Success Highlights

- 25% reduction in CapEx and OpEx
- Dynamic provisioning in minutes rather than months, enabling fast response to business growth opportunities
- 20% savings in people, process and technology due to Cognizant solution accelerators

The challenge



Talcott Resolution built its century-old business on core values of stability and trust. Since 1902, the life insurance and annuity company has been committed to delivering those qualities through excellent service and support—first as a business unit and now as an independent company.

When its former parent sold the unit in 2018, the new company sought to pair its core values with a modern IT infrastructure—and to do it fast. Talcott had just 20 months to stand up its new organization. The task included migrating its 100 custom applications and 50 databases from the former parent’s data center to the cloud and rebranding its website. As a priority of the project, Talcott wanted to ensure zero disruption for its business functions and customers.

Our team completed the project in 10 months. The accelerated migration positioned Talcott to take the lead in a highly competitive market—and to reap significant savings by finalizing its independence well ahead of schedule.

Our approach

As a risk partner for the insurance industry, Talcott’s services provide capital flexibility and risk management. The company administers approximately one million contracts and has \$90 billion in pro-forma assets under management.

One of Talcott’s first actions as a new standalone company was development of a detailed plan for strategic growth. It planned to expand its business footprint by growing through reinsurance and legal entity transactions.

“It was a greenfield opportunity,” says Talcott’s head of software engineering Brad Mills, who had worked at the parent company for more than three decades when the new company was spun off. “We were standing up a new company from scratch. The question we faced was how to do it in as modern a fashion as possible. That was hands down the biggest challenge.”



Key requirements of the IT infrastructure modernization included:

- **Implementing an agile, secure, and scalable IT environment.** In place of the legacy system hosted in the former parent’s on-premises environment, Talcott sought a modern cloud infrastructure that would ensure business continuity and allow rapid growth at an efficient price point.
- **Migrating its extensive production portfolio.** A top priority for Talcott was transitioning custom applications and databases to the cloud with minimum downtime and minimal impact on business functionalities—all within the aggressive separation timeline specified in the terms of Talcott’s divestiture.

Cognizant’s long-term association with the parent company made us a natural fit as partner for the migration and rebranding. We brought a full view of Talcott’s IT landscape, and deep expertise in Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI), which the company selected based on its experience with Oracle Exadata Database.

“Cognizant was our natural go-to,” says Mills. “We’d partnered with them for many years, and we have what I’d call a robust relationship. I don’t delineate between my employee teams and my Cognizant teams. We’re all here for one purpose.”

Collaboration and innovation

Cognizant led multiple tracks of the expansive engagement, including the migration, refactoring to improve the code, and the rebranding.

To meet the project’s tight timeline, our team innovated in several areas:

- Built a set of accelerators to provision the cloud computing resources
- Performed extensive upfront work to facilitate data replication between Talcott and its former parent
- Used HashiCorp Terraform, an infrastructure-as-code tool, to define cloud and on-premises resources in human-readable configuration files that were then versioned, reused, and shared

A critical factor in the engagement was the complex timing of the cutover. It had to occur when production was light, and it also had to follow the timing of the stock market. What’s more, because Talcott and its former parent were now two separate legal entities, there were strict compliance and legal requirements to adhere to, and direct access to the old environment wasn’t always possible. Syncing Talcott’s old and new systems was a challenge.

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—Brad Mills, Head of Software Engineering Talcott Resolution

Business outcomes

As Talcott’s point person for the migration, Mills’ focus was his clients. “It’s all about the outcome,” says Mills. “What mattered to me is that, when I did the cutover, am I still able to service my clients, and are the systems functioning?” The answer was a resounding “yes.”

“The cutover was flawless,” Mills added. “We had set up a war room to handle any problems but closed it down after a couple of days because there was no reason to have anyone there.”



Dynamic scaling and provisioning bring major improvements

For Mills and Talcott, the new system’s ability to scale capacity dynamically and provision on the fly are the biggest benefits of the transition to cloud. In the company’s legacy environment, it took six to eight weeks to stand up a new server. Now, scripting and infrastructure-as-code is completed within a day or two, and then the new server goes live. “It’s a major business improvement,” says Mills.

Talcott Resolution could now jumpstart its business with new agility and efficiencies. Cognizant assisted in completing the transition services agreement (TSA) ahead of schedule, which avoided an extension of the TSA which could have cost millions of dollars.

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Minutes rather than months
in provisioning of new servers

20% savings
in people, process and technology due to Cognizant’s solution accelerators

About Talcott Financial Group

Talcott Financial Group, an international life insurance group, is the insurance industry’s trusted partner for comprehensive risk solutions. The enterprise benefits from its strong financial position, as evidenced by \$122 billion in pro-forma assets under management, its investment-grade financial strength ratings, and its partnership with Sixth Street, a leading global investment firm. Talcott Financial Group’s platforms include Talcott Resolution, based in Windsor, Connecticut, and Talcott Re, based in Hamilton, Bermuda. For more information visit, www.talcott.com