

FORTEM CASE STUDY

Fortem partners with Six Degrees and Microsoft to transition to a scalable Microsoft Azure infrastructure that aligns to its growth ambitions.

Fortem, a Willmott Dixon Group Company, provides specialist property solutions for the social housing sector. Tailored to keep homes running smoothly, Fortem prides itself on working with Social Landlords to provide a warm, safe and decent place for people to live and call home.

The Challenge

Fortem has worked with Six Degrees since 2016. IT Operations Manager Kevin Watson explains: “We first contracted with Six Degrees around six years ago, when we were setting up a greenfield IT infrastructure. We hosted in a collocated environment in Six Degrees’ data centres, and it was six good years.”

Fortem’s Chief Information Officer Chris Hone is responsible for all of the IT services Fortem uses to deliver for its social housing clients. He adds: “We were really looking for a partner to help us on our technology journey. The first step was to build our own private cloud infrastructure, but we were always targeting a journey to public cloud.

“We needed a partner who could bring together all the elements of hosting, network, and security, and that’s what Six Degrees has done for us. The fact that we could view our environment in its entirety with Six Degrees and not have to engage with separate suppliers for each service was a big part of what made them our partner of choice then, and it’s something they continue to deliver on today.”

Kevin explains why Fortem decided it was time to make the move from its collocated environment to public cloud: “We were reaching the point where we would need to invest in a significant hardware refresh to keep our infrastructure in-line with Fortem’s needs. And we recognised that by making the move to public cloud we would be able to leverage public cloud capabilities while increasing our ability to flex as Fortem’s demands evolve.”

Chris builds on this: “Fortem has experienced significant growth over the last few years, and moving forwards we have plans to grow to a £300 million turnover business. We needed an infrastructure that would underpin that journey, allowing us to scale securely in a way that our clients would expect. It was also important that we gave our clients confidence that we aligned with the latest best practice infrastructure and security standards.”

Benefits at a Glance



Aligned to Fortem’s growth strategy. Fortem’s Azure infrastructure aligns with its growth strategy, as it will scale seamlessly with the organisation as it aims to grow to a £300 million turnover business.



Enhanced cyber security posture. Fortem has enhanced its cyber security posture by transitioning to Microsoft Azure.



Leveraging the latest Microsoft tooling. Being in the Microsoft ecosystem enables Fortem to take advantage of the latest Microsoft tooling as it evolves.



Gain access to Microsoft funding. As a Microsoft Azure Expert MSP, Six Degrees was able to access funding that supported Fortem in financing the migration.



Reassuring clients of best practices. Fortem is able to give its clients confidence that it is aligning with the latest best practice infrastructure and security standards.

The Solution

Chris explains why Fortem chose to transition its infrastructure to Microsoft Azure:

"We've been a Microsoft house from day one, and migrating to Azure as our public cloud felt like a natural progression. Willmott Dixon's group strategy is based around Microsoft, and since our in-house skillset is with Microsoft, Azure was the obvious choice."

Kevin adds: "Six Degrees has been a trusted partner to Fortem for six years, and as we hosted in their data centres they were our incumbent data hosting partner. We had a lot of faith in Six Degrees' skillsets and how they would manage the project, which was important as moving to public cloud is a significant transition."

Chris appreciated the partnership Fortem has built with Six Degrees, and cites it as a key reason for selecting Six Degrees to carry out the project: "There are any number of people we could have gone to in order to manage our migration to Azure. The difference with Six Degrees was the long-standing, trusted partnership we've built together."

"Through Six Degrees' partnership with Microsoft, we were able to leverage Microsoft funding for this project. Throughout the contracting, design and migration process we worked closely with both Six Degrees and Microsoft."

Kevin describes his experience of the project: "The migration really went well. There was zero impact on business operations; everyone pulled together and worked towards a shared goal, which is exactly how we wanted it to be. When challenges came up, we worked collaboratively to solve them – everyone was on board and on the same page."

The Outcome

Now that Fortem's migration to Azure is complete, the organisation is benefitting from enhanced security and scalability – huge drivers for Chris: "Azure has removed a ceiling which means our infrastructure now meets our growth ambitions while aligning with the infrastructure and security best practices our clients should expect from us. And in terms of future innovation, being plugged into the Microsoft ecosystem means there is lots of potential for us to take advantage of the latest Microsoft tooling as it evolves such as AI and predictive analytics."

Chris values the people at Six Degrees, and how they understand and align to Fortem's needs: "Six Degrees is a tier one partner to Fortem. I am confident that our Account Manager – who has been with us since day one of the relationship – has our best interests at heart when we buy from Six Degrees, and that the business backs him in taking that client-first approach."

"The Microsoft funding Six Degrees unlocked for us was a big deal and a massive value add to Fortem. Six Degrees recognised that funding was an enabler for us, and they were diligent in doing what they needed to do to secure it with Microsoft."

Kevin adds: "We've had a really strong, stable Account Management and Service Delivery Management team throughout our relationship with Six Degrees, to the extent that they feel like an extension of our own IT team."

"This was consistent throughout the migration and into in-life support. For example, Six Degrees identified a Microsoft Azure ExpressRoute option that would save us money, and proactively approached us with it – even though it would result in less revenue for them. That knowledge both of Microsoft and of us and our organisation is going to be a critical role that Six Degrees plays in our journey moving forward with Azure."

Chris concludes by summarising the strength of Fortem's partnership with Six Degrees: "That client-first approach carries a huge amount of weight, because it shows that Six Degrees is looking at the situation through our eyes. It's the kind of thing that separates a supplier relationship from a true partnership. What we have with Six Degrees is a true partnership that we really value."

Our Solutions



Cyber Services

Enhance your cyber security and safeguard your organisation with our cyber security strategy and advisory, consultancy, and managed services.



Hybrid Cloud

Host all of your workloads in the most appropriate location while experiencing the simplicity of one cloud from Six Degrees.



Connected Workspace

Access the smarter, faster technology needed to make the most of your hybrid working future.

About Six Degrees

Six Degrees is a leading secure, integrated cloud services provider. We protect UK organisations and help them thrive in the cloud by giving them secure platforms to innovate and grow.

We put our exceptional people in a position to succeed, and along with our robust capabilities and strategic vendor partnerships this enables us to support customers on their digital transformation journeys regardless of their maturity, with the goal of enabling them to operate effectively and securely in the cloud.

Our intelligence-led security services provide the most appropriate detection and response capabilities versus evolving cyber threats, ongoing assurance, and rapid response, allowing us to mitigate attacks quickly.

We've aligned all our services to allow customers to navigate the complexities they face today – enabling them to solve their digital transformation challenges and succeed as businesses.

Our vision is to be the UK's number one provider of secure, integrated cloud services.



Six Degrees will enable you to optimise and maximise the value from your Microsoft partnership. Speak to an expert:
<https://hub.6dq.co.uk/schedule-call-microsoft-services>