

ASCENT TECHNOLOGY HELPS BIDFOOD SA MIGRATE TO MICROSOFT AZURE



When Bidfood SA chose to modernise and migrate its data platform to Microsoft Azure, it turned to Ascent Technology for help.

In a world that is digitally transforming, it is more vital than ever to an organisation's success to utilise the latest platforms to drive efficiencies, cost savings and business agility.

Bidfood is a leading food service distributor and supply partner, is part of the Bidcorp Group, and has operations in 30 countries, across five continents. It provides a complete one stop shop solution that encompasses a wide range of products and services, tailored to add value to its customers' establishments across Southern Africa. These include restaurants, pubs and clubs, hotels, resorts and casinos, B&Bs, industrial, in-house and private caterers, as well as schools, universities, hospitals, government departments and many others.

According to Johan Kok, IT Executive at Bidfood SA, the company had two key requirements: undertaking a platform modernisation project, as well as a migration to Microsoft Azure. The latter was a requirement as Bidfood wished to move away from a private hosted environment into a public cloud environment.

"To help achieve these two goals, we turned to Ascent Technology, a company that has vast experience in this field. The project was driven, at least in part, by Bidfood's desire to move away from utilising its current IT infrastructure and services outsourcer, thereby bringing the organisation's IT management and control in-house. Also, moving to Azure allows us to plan effectively for the future, as it offers us the increased scalability and functionality we require, while also enhancing availability," he says.

Kok adds that while the migration went smoothly, Bidfood's own people experienced a large learning curve. After all, he explains, when using the previous outsource partner, their internal people were unable to analyse information, or view how the systems were configured or performing.

"Thus, the first three months after the migration entailed a lot of intense learning for our IT team, and again, Ascent's expertise made a large difference here. Not only did they assist our people, but they effectively helped us to identify trends, fine tune systems and to generally minimise any disruption to our business."

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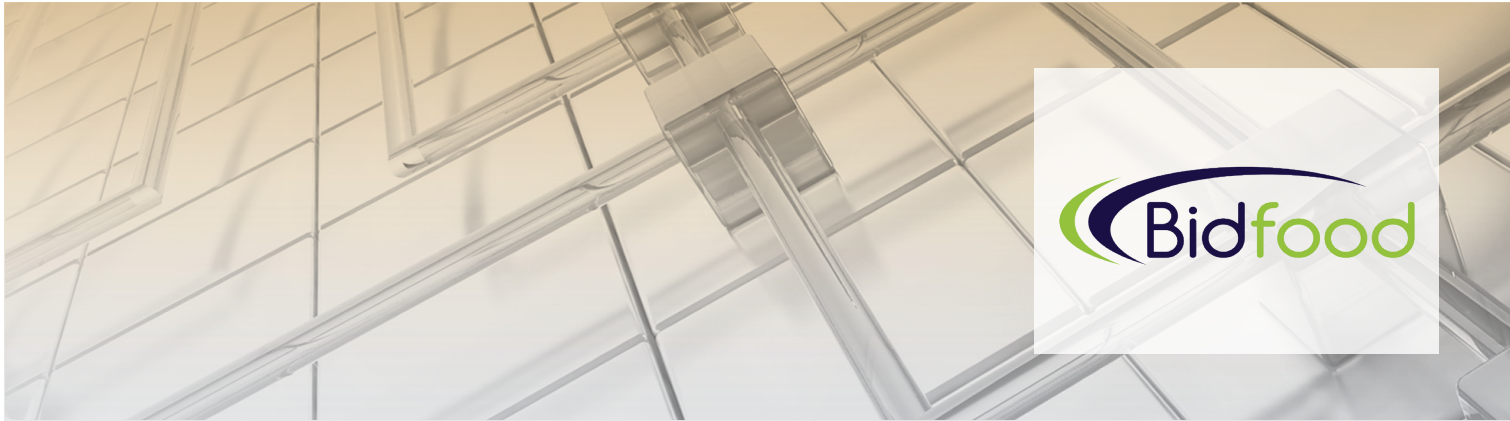
"Perhaps the most impressive part of this project is that it was undertaken at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, which meant that the work all had to be done remotely, since face-to-face meetings were out of the question. Despite this challenge, Ascent was still able to analyse, fault-find and adjust where necessary. This clearly demonstrates that with the right partner, it is still possible to successfully complete complex

projects, despite the difficulties arising from the pandemic."

From a technical point of view, states Kok, Ascent also played a big role in helping the company's IT team with script optimisation, performance and – with respect to the data warehouse – enhanced reporting functionality. By optimising how fast the information is

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provided, the company is now able to ensure that these reports are available for analysis immediately, as opposed to having to wait for half a day, as had to be done in the past.

"Covid-19 challenges notwithstanding, Ascent was able to facilitate our migration to Azure in around six weeks, as we faced a pressure deadline to complete the project. This was because our existing outsource agreement was coming to an end, and we needed the new platform in place before then. Despite this pressure, the project was completed exactly on time and according to plan."

"The success of the project can be determined by comparing the number of support calls received each quarter. When we were still running on the old environment, we averaged around 1 400 ERP-related support calls, but since we completed the migration, we have been receiving less than 700 calls per quarter."

Not only does this represent a 50% saving, suggests Kok, but it also means that because the company's IT department is handling fewer challenges, even though it is now in-sourced, the team can

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focus more intently on project delivery. They have been able to switch from a reactive to a proactive approach, something that frees up the team to apply their minds to strategic issues.

"I was brought in specifically to manage and oversee the data platform modernisation and migration to the cloud. In such a scenario, you only want to work with those you trust, and having previously worked with Ascent, I had no hesitation in bringing them on board," he says.

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According to Johan Lamberts, MD of Ascent Technology, the company is pleased to have its reputation precede it in this manner, which clearly demonstrates its effectiveness as a trusted advisor in this space.

"It is always gratifying to work with a company of this size and stature, and it is especially exciting to be able to work closely with a client in overcoming the unique challenges presented by a project of this nature. We understand that Bidfood has further plans it wants to implement,

and we stand ready to assist them with these as well, as we build on what we anticipate will be a fruitful relationship for many years to come," he says.

Kok notes that the way the world is digitally transforming indicates that things are going to continue evolving at a rapid rate for the foreseeable future. To this end, he says, Microsoft Azure is an enterprise-ready cloud, which means the company is well positioned to be flexible, and to be able to adapt and adjust to this ongoing technology evolution quickly and easily.

"We have already been able to leverage the new platform to help us optimise our internal business processes, so looking ahead, we will now be able to further streamline and improve these, thanks to the increased flexibility and scalability it offers."

"There is certainly a lot that we can still do to further modernise and improve things through the effective utilisation of Azure. I see the future as being one that involves an iterative approach to improvement. Microsoft Azure gives us the ideal platform to conduct a continuous cycle of review and improve, while being able to leave our legacy environments firmly in the past," concludes Kok.