



HomeMaster SaaS helps streamline admin at housing associations

HomeMaster is an organisation committed to providing leading Edge web-based platforms for housing providers in the UK. It needed a cloud hosting infrastructure specialist to quickly roll out and scale the software platform at launch. It chose Host-IT, which helped implement a secure and partitioned 'shared server' for all HomeMaster clients. Today, there are an additional 15 'private servers' in operation for meeting the different capacity and compliance requirements needs of the rapidly expanding client base. Craig Brock, Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer, HomeMaster, explained more about the partnership.



A safe house

Founded in 2019, Designer Software is the developer and provider of the HomeMaster financial accounting and administration platform for UK housing associations. The five company founders, with their previous and varied experience of working in the housing sector, had identified the market opportunity for the provision of a comprehensive, yet more flexible Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution delivered via the web.

At that time, all financial software offerings available to housing providers were locked into custom on-premises solutions, which presented growing security, compliance, cost and support concerns to many.

In May 2019, with the support of cloud hosting infrastructure specialists, Host-IT, Designer Software launched HomeMaster to its first housing association customer based in Glasgow.

Project requirements

When designing and developing its initial web-based solution in 2019, the team at Designer Software recognised the importance of identifying a suitable hosting provider. This was essential to enable it to be ready to quickly roll out and scale the software platform at launch. However, with no previous in-house infrastructure experience, the chosen hosting partner would ideally need to be willing to invest time in learning and understanding the unique challenges of its start-up business as well as the changing and often complex requirements of its housing provider clients.

“We knew we required a more hands-on approach and on-going technical support,” said Craig Brock, Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer at HomeMaster. “While we had plenty of knowledge from working in the housing sector, we were not cloud hosting infrastructure experts and recognised from day one that we did not want to be hosting our



IT'S VERY TOUGH TO BREAK INTO THE HOUSING SECTOR AND WE COULD NOT AFFORD TO RISK OUR REPUTATION DUE TO ANY POTENTIAL IT DELIVERY ISSUES.



“
HOST-IT QUICKLY UNDERSTOOD AND SOLVED OUR CLOUD HOSTING INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS BY HAVING A LOCAL DATA CENTRE WITH DEDICATED ON-SITE ENGINEERING SUPPORT PERSONNEL.

platform in-house. It's very tough to break into the housing sector and we could not afford to risk our reputation due to any potential IT delivery issues.”

Key hosting partner criteria:

- Scalable and low latency hosting solution
- Proven infrastructure and IT support track record
- Data security and compliance credentials
- Price competitiveness
- Customer-centric service

The solution

Having considered various cloud hosting options including Microsoft Azure and Amazon AWS, Designer Software selected Host-IT as its hosting and infrastructure provider. Host-IT has been developing and hosting websites and operating its own data centres since 1995. The company supports many types of clients both technical and non-technical including SMEs, large multinationals, local authorities, not-for-profit organisations, IT service providers and web development companies. Its services are strategically located at Proximity Data Centres' colocation data centre

campus in Milton Keynes, a purpose-built, tier 3 standard 48,000 sq ft facility with multiple data halls. Providing 3MW of available power, the site offers low latency connectivity via multiple tier 1 carrier connections including dark fibres with fully diverse links.

Brock said: “Host-IT quickly understood and solved our cloud hosting infrastructure needs by having a local data centre with dedicated on-site engineering support personnel. To help build the vital trust factor in front of our clients, it could also provide a demonstrable strong track record in serving public sector organisations. Equally important, it was prepared to grow with us even though back then we were in start-up mode.”

Initially, Host-IT helped implement a secure and partitioned 'shared server' for all HomeMaster clients. Today, however, there are an additional 15 'private servers' in operation for meeting the different capacity and compliance requirements needs of the rapidly expanding client base. Recently, Host-IT also proposed, piloted and subsequently implemented new CPU architecture resulting in a 30% processing performance increase while also further reducing latency.