Solution Showcase

Kovarus Helps National Grocery Retailer Pursue a Digital Transformation Journey

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Abstract: Kovarus is a systems integrator that helps companies modernize and automate IT—assisting businesses such as National Grocery Retailer to transform their IT service delivery in order to accelerate innovation and deliver cost-effective business outcomes. By leveraging their IT expertise as well as the Kovarus Solutions Portfolio of best-in-class technologies and services, Kovarus delivered an integrated solution that enabled the company to reach its digital transformation goals.

Embracing Change

At one of the largest food and pharmacy retailers in the U.S., senior IT leaders could see that the world was transforming around them. They recognized that they needed to change their IT service delivery process and begin taking advantage of the benefits of automation. They wanted their organization to be able to stay ahead of the game and the pace of change.

They were not alone. ESG research shows that businesses embrace digital transformation to help them become more agile and thus meet evolving business requirements more effectively. In fact, most organizations surveyed by ESG (86%) realize that if they don't embrace digital transformation, they will be at a competitive disadvantage versus those who do.[1] Also, 66% of IT managers surveyed say their IT environments are more complex than they were two years ago.[2] That is because IT organizations are managing greater data volumes, more endpoints, more applications, and more users.

Technology issues are holding some of these companies back, hampering their efforts to improve operational efficiency. Many companies are not sure where to start and are experiencing internal headwinds that are stalling execution plans. What they need is a fresh jumpstart to get them back on their digital transformation journey—a way to reach the goal of evolving their IT function into a true business enabler. This is where Kovarus, a systems integrator that helps companies modernize and automate IT, helped this national grocery retailer and other clients in similar situations.

How to Jumpstart a Digital Transformation Journey

Kovarus leverages best-in-class technologies and services to help customers accelerate innovation and deliver cost-effective business outcomes. The Kovarus portfolio enables businesses to transform IT service delivery through:

- **Infrastructure optimization.** Modernizing and improving an IT infrastructure provides a foundation for simplifying and standardizing, which results in delivering the best application response time while maintaining the greatest infrastructure efficiency. ESG has seen the benefit businesses get by modernizing their existing resources (networking,

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[1] Source: ESG Master Survey Results, *2018 IT Spending Intentions Survey*, February 2018.
[2] Source: ESG Master Survey Results, *2019 Technology Spending Intentions Survey*, March 2019.

compute, and storage), reducing the time and money spent maintaining them. Such efforts bring enhanced performance, availability, and scalability—forming the underpinning for the next phase, cloud automation.

- **Cloud automation.** Cloud automation delivers a platform to reduce manual work, streamlining IT processes by automating tasks such as provisioning and delivering Infrastructure as Code to enable on-demand deployments. Cloud automation allows IT to become a service broker for the rest of the business—delivering automated provisioning of applications and services regardless of where infrastructure components are physically located.

- **Application delivery.** Application delivery enables organizations to innovate faster through modern application practices (DevOps, CI/CD, and Agile) by leveraging and optimizing resources across cloud environments. This focus on applications is about creating and delivering high-performance services for the business, as opposed to managing hardware and software. Effective application delivery allows an IT organization to better integrate with DevOps efforts, more easily adopt new/emerging technologies, and offer a higher, more transformative level of value to the business as a whole.

Case Study: National Grocery Retailer Digital Transformation Journey

Kovarus worked with this grocer retailer to implement a solution based on best-in-class technologies and services. This grocer retailer is a well-run IT organization, and the business and IT issues it was experiencing were not insurmountable. They had been conferring with various OEMs regarding exactly how it should proceed, but the company was getting a lot of conflicting advice, which gave rise to confusion about how to move forward.

To help it identify the best route to take, they decided to leverage the Kovarus Proven Solutions Center (KPSC). The KPSC lets prospective Kovarus clients see what is possible prior to making an actual monetary investment. By leveraging the KPSC, they gave them self a chance to gain confidence that Kovarus could deliver the support needed. This grocery retailer was able to envision a comprehensive solution before actually implementing anything. It was a way for their decision makers to see how differently—and more efficiently—various business operations would operate, and how different parts of the environment would work together. For example, they saw how Kovarus planned to integrate different manufacturers and product lines into one coherent automation strategy.

At this point, this grocery retailer and Kovarus agreed they were ready to tackle the next step, targeting areas of improvement to concentrate on. They wanted to:

- Provide consistent deployments, and reduce the risk and security footprint.
- Increase the speed of IT services provisioning to the rest of the business through self-service.
- Reduce deployment time due to handoff between multiple teams.
- Drive cost efficiencies to reduce OpEx and CapEx.

Early in the effort to implement a automation platform, Kovarus performed assessments to move them further on its transformation journey in relation to infrastructure optimization, cloud automation, and application delivery. As those services steadily came online, their managers returned to the KPSC to observe how Kovarus integrated them in the solution.

Infrastructure Optimization-related Assistance

In terms of infrastructure optimization, Kovarus made sure to select products and tools for them that had APIs to allow Kovarus to develop automation solutions—for example, they selected the NSX network virtualization and security platform from VMware, and the Dell

> "Now, infrastructure provisioning changes happen in minutes instead of weeks."
>
> —*VP of IT, National Grocery Retailer*

EMC ViPR software-defined storage platform to abstract, pool, and automate physical storage. Kovarus helped them to:

- Establish an infrastructure that aligns with its digital transformation strategy.

- Identify products and tools with the correct APIs and plug-ins necessary to integrate with the larger automation program being put into place.

- Increase infrastructure and deployment stability.

Cloud Automation-related Assistance

Much of the integration work Kovarus performed aligned with its cloud automation service specialty. Kovarus leveraged APIs provided by various IT manufacturers to create vital integrations, and these API integrations allow them to:

- Ensure integration and interoperability with a wide variety of enterprise management systems.

- Provide database-as-a-service, including automating the deployment of Oracle RAC cluster databases and Microsoft SQL Server AlwaysOn Availability Groups for high availability and disaster recovery. This work enabled them to start migrating applications into their automation platform.

- Address risk and security through the automation of a firewall policy.

- Interconnect with the ServiceNow platform—with interfaces for everything from billing, chargeback, and approvals, to firewall-as-a-service, load-balancing-as-a-service, and database backup-as-a-service. Importantly, ServiceNow gives their executives "single pane of glass" visibility to observe all operations in action.

The API identification and subsequent coding work by Kovarus to ensure everything would work together has created a true cloud experience for their users. And it is better protecting that company. This is a modern, scalable framework that they can choose to build upon over time.

Application Delivery-related Assistance

In regard to application delivery support, Kovarus transformed how they provision and operate their applications and software. As a result, they are now able to provide a quicker and more consistent experience, which in turn reduces costs associated with the ongoing operations due to platform disparities.

They can now take actions such as incorporating containers, which gives their application developers the ability to create their apps in a safe environment rather than going directly to a public cloud. Kovarus set the stage for this capability.

Kovarus also addressed their risk-related security concerns by providing micro-segmentation capabilities for the virtualized environment—this work is enabling them to assign granular, quite specific security policies to data center applications and individual workloads.

The Bigger Truth

This national grocer retailer has rebooted its digital transformation journey and is no longer tied to traditional IT processes. It is in a better position to adapt to disruptive market changes. It can now capitalize on new revenue streams in a faster, less risky, more cost-optimized manner.

Information technology OEMs typically will focus on promoting their own products to prospects, and then proceed to describe themselves as "trusted partners."

Organizations want more than lip service about trusted partnering from their IT vendors, though. They want partners who are able to demonstrate exactly how a diverse collection of advanced IT solutions from different OEMs can work together optimally. They want those experts to assist them in implementing that optimized architecture in a time-effective, cost-effective way.

Doing something such as Kovarus has done—bringing together solutions from many vendors and tying everything to ServiceNow—is not easy. Nor is it something OEMs want to focus on. Kovarus is different. It made use of its collective integration and digital transformation experience to help them eliminate complexity, save time, save money (including a 25% reduction in CapEx and OpEx), and set a strong foundation for its future.

The Kovarus brand of expertise in configuring, optimizing, and integrating products and services needed for today's cloud-enabled IT is a kind of "secret sauce" that clearly brought success to this project. With its Kovarus Proven Solutions Center and its IT integration specialists, this SI brought together a range of technologies to create a cloud automation platform that fundamentally realigns their processes to fit into a new world.

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