



CASE STUDY

The Smith Family accelerates innovation to help provide education to Australian children and young people living in disadvantage

By migrating its data warehouse to the cloud, the Australian nonprofit can better respond to children in need

Business situation

Helping kids through innovation

One in six Australian children and young people are living in poverty¹. That's a staggering number and a heartbreaking social issue. For The Smith Family, the solution to this problem begins with education. The national, independent Australian nonprofit believes that supporting children's learning is the best way to help break the cycle of poverty. By providing support through programs in literacy, numeracy, technology and mentoring – among others – the organisation is helping to create a lasting impact for future generations of families.

The Smith Family also believes in the importance of innovation and the ways technology can support its goal to equip even more young people with the tools they need to thrive in the 21st century. This innovation begins with data modernisation. To kick off a comprehensive digital transformation, the organisation developed a Microsoft-first cloud strategy that will provide a platform for innovation and help create new ways to reach more children in need. This became particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when there was an increased demand for new tools and creative ways to provide education remotely.

One of the first stages of this strategy was migrating its on-premises Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) into the Microsoft Azure cloud. The legacy EDW lacked the scalability, accessibility and security that The Smith Family needed, and the organisation wanted to use a new cloud platform to unlock data-driven decision-making capabilities. This foundational solution will provide a simpler and more collaborative experience for employees and will give The Smith Family the insights and operational efficiency it needs to expand its reach further into disadvantaged communities. However, it needed a trusted adviser to help guide the migration and share best practices. Thanks to our expertise both with the Microsoft cloud and the nonprofit sector – through our [Tech for Social Good](#) program – it partnered with Avanade.

¹ Poverty in Australia, 2020, ACOSS/UNSW Report.

Solution

Rethinking cloud data with a secure platform

This project began with a short discovery phase, during which The Smith Family worked closely in person with Avanade to build out its Azure migration strategy. Shortly afterward, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, adding new complexity to the project and forcing the rest of the implementation to be completed virtually, using collaboration tools that included Microsoft Teams.

As the first major platform within the organisation to be migrated to the cloud, the team had to lay a solid foundation. Using our cloud experience, we provisioned the Azure environment with proprietary Avanade tools, collectively known as "Avanade Assets". Throughout this process, our experts provided guidance to ensure a successful migration.

During the entire 12-week process, there was a heavy emphasis placed on security, particularly given the increased need for mobile and online education activities as a result of the pandemic. Used to traditional on-premises infrastructure, The Smith Family wanted to ensure that the data of its donors, partners and beneficiaries was safely encrypted in the cloud. Security and ease of migration are both key features of Azure, which gave the organisation increased confidence in the solution. "Working with Avanade, we were not only able to achieve our migration goal, but also lift the capability beyond the migration and extend our security compliance," says Minu Ganesh, The Smith Family's data platform lead. "Keeping our data safe is of the utmost importance to us."

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Results

Technology to support a greater good

From a technical standpoint, The Smith Family now has a data platform that is secure, scalable, accessible – including via mobile devices – and efficient. With access to data in the cloud, the organisation will be able to better support volunteers, engage with donors and understand patterns in the way people donate that will aid in fundraising initiatives. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has proven the importance of operational flexibility and resilience, and the cloud provides both. This solution has laid a foundation for more ways to enhance The Smith Family's ability to support disadvantaged children across Australia and provide a real human impact. The project is a great example of how a successful cloud migration can happen in a 100% virtual delivery environment – thanks to the collaboration between Avanade and The Smith Family and the power of Azure.

About The Smith Family

The Smith Family is a national, independent Australian children's charity helping children and young people living in disadvantage to get the most out of their education so they can create better futures for themselves.

For more information, go to thesmithfamily.com.au

About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions and design-led experiences on the Microsoft ecosystem. Our professionals bring bold, fresh thinking combined with technology, business and industry expertise to help make a human impact on our clients, their customers and their employees. We are the power behind the Accenture Microsoft Business Group, helping companies to engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations and transform products, leveraging the Microsoft platform. Avanade has 39,000 professionals in 25 countries, bringing clients our best thinking through a collaborative culture that honors diversity and reflects the communities in which we operate. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com

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