

Windows Azure Platform Partner Solution Case Study



Partner: Atomus

Website: www.atomus.com

Partner Size: 25 employees

Country or Region: United Kingdom

Industry: Software engineering

Partner Profile

Based in Farnham, United Kingdom, and with offices in the United States, Atomus is an independent software vendor with expertise in field force coaching, training, and talent management solutions.

Software and Services

- Windows Azure Platform
 - Windows Azure
 - Microsoft SQL Azure
- Microsoft Silverlight 4
- Technologies
 - Microsoft .NET Framework

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Developer Quickly Meets Customer Need, Speeds Sales Cycle with Trusted Cloud Services

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Lars Prah, Technical Director, Atomus

Atomus prides itself on being a customer-focused, solution-driven company. So when customers asked for a cloud-based version of a:coach, the company's field force coaching application, it turned to the Windows Azure platform. By developing on the Windows Azure platform, Atomus brought its cloud-based version of a:coach to market in a matter of weeks, lowered barriers to customer adoption, and has a reliable solution that customers trust.

Business Needs

[Atomus](http://www.atomus.com) is a member of the Microsoft Partner Network and independent software vendor that develops field force coaching, training, and talent management solutions for enterprise customers around the world, including a leading global pharmaceutical company. One such solution is a:coach, a software application that helps companies with large field work forces, such as sales personnel, track and measure individual employee performance and then accurately pinpoint areas for behavioral and professional development.

When Atomus was founded in 2005, a:coach was initially built on IBM Lotus Notes. However, the company realized that several of its potential customers did not use Lotus Notes and wanted a solution built on a more extensible foundation. So, in 2008 the company moved a:coach to the Microsoft .NET Framework.

Then, in 2010, Atomus found that several of its customers were seeking cloud-based solutions as a way to manage operational costs and avoid the capital investments required for on-premises solutions.

“Customers are in [cost-cutting mode right](#)



[now and many are turning to cloud computing](#) where they can,” says Simon Mormen, Founder and Managing Director at Atomus. “It is our responsibility to adapt to their needs and find a way to deliver a:coach as a cloud solution.”

The company knew that it needed to find a way to build a cloud-based service without increasing the size of its data center, which would be a costly and time-consuming endeavor for the 25-person company. Atomus wanted to use a public cloud infrastructure—which is owned and managed by an organization that provides cloud services to others—but needed a reliable provider that its customers trusted.

Solution

As a company that builds solutions for field work forces, Atomus is familiar with Salesforce.com and first considered its Force.com cloud platform. Atomus quickly realized that developers would have to rewrite a:coach in the Apex programming language to create a cloud-based version of the solution for Force.com. Instead, in May 2010, the company migrated a:coach to the [Windows Azure platform](#). “Because we already used the .NET Framework, it was an easy decision to go with the Windows Azure platform,” says Lars Prahel, Technical Director at Atomus. “We also plan to migrate our other .NET-based and Java-based solutions to Windows Azure in the future.”

Atomus uses Windows Azure for its [compute and storage needs](#). Windows Azure serves as the Microsoft cloud services development, hosting, and management environment, and is hosted in Microsoft data centers, which comply with industry standards and regulations for physical and data security. Atomus deployed its application to three Windows Azure

instances and can add more instances as demand increases. It also uses the Table service in Windows Azure to store localization files and error messages.

To store customer data, Atomus uses [Microsoft SQL Azure](#), which is the highly available, scalable cloud database service built on Microsoft SQL Server technologies and hosted in Microsoft data centers.

For the web-based interface, Atomus uses the Microsoft Silverlight 4 browser plug-in for its rich user experience and offline capabilities. By using Silverlight 4, Atomus gives customers the ability to access the a:coach application even when they are not connected to the Internet. “With its offline capabilities, Silverlight is perfect for a:coach because field employees may not always have connectivity,” explains Prahel.

Atomus will offer its on-premises solution until mid-year of 2012, but then plans to offer only Windows Azure-based solutions.

Benefits

As a result of developing for the Windows Azure platform, Atomus quickly brought its cloud-based solution to market and can offer an on-demand version of its coaching solution on a reliable platform.

Reduce Time-to-Market

Atomus quickly delivered its cloud-based version of a:coach within time and budgetary constraints, quickly meeting customer demand. “By using the Windows Azure platform, we were able to port 90 percent of our code in just two days and were complete in a couple of weeks,” says Prahel. “With Force.com, it would have taken months of development work.” The company attributes some of its quick success to the support that it received

from Microsoft. “Microsoft was instrumental in helping us go to market in the cloud,” says Mormen. “We participated in sessions at the Microsoft Technology Center and received technical assistance, which prepared us to migrate our solution to the Windows Azure platform.”

Lower the Barrier to Customer Adoption

Offering a cloud solution lowered the barrier to implement a:coach. By using Windows Azure, Atomus customers do not have to involve their IT department with complicated deployments or technical configurations—the coaching application is available on demand. Likewise, it can deploy updates and new features automatically through the cloud. “With Windows Azure as our infrastructure, the decision to use a:coach is placed in the hands of the business, not the IT department,” says Mormen. “This helps us speed up our sales cycle by 20 percent.”

Atomus also took the opportunity to restructure its pricing model, and lowered costs for customers. “[By taking advantage of fixed, subscription pricing with Windows Azure](#), we can also offer customers a tiered, fixed-term monthly licensing model that can scale from 200 users to 200,000 users,” explains Mormen. “We can pass on that savings to customers.”

Offer Customers a Trustworthy Platform

As a niche software organization that sells its coaching solution to enterprise customers, Atomus knows that having a platform hosted in security-enhanced Microsoft data centers is critical. “Our customers want a name that they can trust, and they trust Microsoft for its reliability and security,” explains Mormen. “Partnering with Microsoft and using Windows Azure enhances our credibility.”