



Microsoft .NET Framework 3.0 Customer Solution Case Study



Customer: Matrix Decisions
Web Site: www.matrixknowledge.com
Number of Employees: 80
Country or Region: United Kingdom
Industry: Professional services—IT
Partner: 7global

Customer Profile

London-based Matrix Decisions provides Web-based decision support and information management software built on the Microsoft® .NET Framework development system. It also has an office in the United States.

Software and Services

- Technologies
 - Microsoft .NET Framework

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Software Provider Moves to Hosted Solutions to Double Company Value in Two Years

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Jeremy Collins, Chief Technology Officer, Matrix Decisions

Matrix Decisions wanted to deliver its proprietary aspirahub software to the public sector. Key requirements were a simple delivery model and data security. It worked with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner 7global to launch a highly secure hosted solution. After successfully delivering the solution to its first customer, the United Kingdom (U.K.) Home Office, Matrix Decisions now also provides it to 10 more customers and expects to double its net worth in two years.

Business Needs

One of the leading IT solutions providers in the United Kingdom (U.K.), Matrix Decisions created its aspirahub software on the Microsoft .NET Framework development system for its private sector customers. It automates data collection, analysis, and aggregation processes for corporate reporting, including health and safety and environmental reports.

In 2007, in a strategic move to expand the business by providing more services to existing customers, the parent company Matrix Knowledge Group (MKG) wanted to target aspirahub to its public sector clients.

The onus was on Matrix Decisions to set up an appropriate business model to fulfil the needs of these existing high-profile MKG customers, such as the Home Office and other major government departments. Jeremy Collins, Chief Technology Officer at Matrix Decisions, explains: “One of the key complexities of serving the public sector is stringent IT policies. The vendor requires approvals from a large number of people within the customer organisation at every stage—be it deployment or simple configuration changes.”

Matrix never considered distributing the software on CD because that would have



required complex IT approvals. “We opted for a software hosting model because we could get approvals for the product once and deploy it many times,” says Collins. “We had hosted applications on third-party infrastructure for our private sector customers. In the public sector, we could see even more benefits because it reduces the complexity for our customers, meaning we get the application to market much faster.”

The next challenge was to collaborate with a hosting partner. The company’s first customer was the U.K. Home Office. It required an application to facilitate collaboration—through a content management system, message boards, and document sharing—and to monitor performance through regular data collection and online reporting. The solution had to ensure a highly secure environment for the government department’s sensitive information.

Solution

Matrix Decisions participated in the Microsoft Incubation Centre Programme and Microsoft Empower for Independent Software Vendors Programme. These initiatives helped the company identify and engage with the right hosting partner—Microsoft Gold Certified Partner 7global—and benefit from the company’s expertise and services in the software-plus-services market.

7global provided Matrix Decisions with dedicated technicians, hardware, and networking equipment to host and manage the application. Based in a former Bank of England building, its flagship data centre offers unparalleled hardware security with all servers located in bullion vaults. The centre is also ISO 27001 certified and meets the Home Office information security standards. Collins says: “Moreover, the 7global infrastructure is based on Microsoft technologies, which means greater credibility for our solutions in the public sector, compared to other vendors such as Oracle and IBM. Most U.K. government organisations have good relationships with Microsoft and trust its technology.”

Matrix Decisions customised aspirahub according to Home Office requirements and produced a software-plus-services offering called Police Collaboration Hub. Already ported to the latest version of the .NET Framework, aspirahub required no recoding to run on the 7global Windows® environment.

As a Microsoft Software-Plus-Services Incubation Centre, 7global helped Matrix Decisions to:

- Configure and test the application in its data centre during a proof of concept lasting three months
- Enhance information security by conducting penetration tests involving system analyses for any potential vulnerability from improper configurations
- Address key issues related to Web-based application delivery, such as multi-tenancy and monitoring through an architecture design session—a workshop offered only by Microsoft Software-Plus-Services Incubation Centres to help independent software vendors technically adapt applications to the Web hosting model

Collins says: “Experts at 7global are very familiar with the technology. As a result, the deployment process was much easier than expected.” In the next stage, 7global plans to conduct a business development session to help Matrix Decisions expand the software-plus-services offering in the private sector. It will comprise knowledge transfer on best practices for software-plus-services as well as market positioning strategies.

Benefits

With 7global’s ISO 27001 Information Security Accreditation and a secure data centre, Matrix Decisions is fast establishing itself in the public sector. The Home Office started using the Police Collaboration Hub in May 2008 and is now benefiting from the hosted software-plus-services solution. Oscar Ramudo, Protective Services Programme Manager at the Home Office, says: “The solution by Matrix Decisions is an interactive tool and has the potential to empower

stakeholders to collaborate more effectively.”

By end-2008, Matrix Decisions had started hosting applications for 10 more public sector customers—amounting to 5,000 users. And, supported by technical knowledge, the architecture design session, and the planned business development session by 7global, the company has now launched the software-plus-services offering in the private sector. “Our collaboration with a Microsoft Incubation Centre is helping us realise more business opportunities, and in a faster way,” says Collins. “And the software-plus-services model will be a major contributor to our aim of doubling the value of the company within the next two years.”

- **Business continuity.** Public sector users of aspirahub experience consistently high-quality service, with minimum downtime, because applications are available 99.8 per cent of the time.
- **Reliable support.** Matrix Decisions can report any issues with the physical infrastructure to 7global by e-mail or phone and get an immediate response.
- **Greater data security.** ISO 27001 certified 7global data centre and the new testing environment at Matrix Decisions provide greater security for customers’ sensitive data.
- **Improved efficiency.** Dedicated 7global staff help ensure efficient system management, leading to greater customer confidence.
- **Fast time to market.** By shortening the customer approval cycle, Matrix Decisions deploys live applications quickly.
- **Lower operational costs.** Matrix Decisions saves significant costs by managing the application remotely, eliminating the need for technical staff to visit the customer site for upgrades and maintenance.
- **Reduced capital investment.** Less investment in hardware, software licensing, networking equipment, and dedicated staff.