



## Case Study

//RE Cloud Platform  
lends H&T Pawnbrokers  
room for growth.



## At leading lending firm H&T Pawnbrokers, rapid growth and ambitious plans for further expansion created an urgent need for an infrastructure review and refresh.

With over 190 stores throughout the UK experiencing high demand for its pawnbroking, gold purchasing, business loans and unsecured lending services H&T knew that the limitations of its IT infrastructure could impede future growth. So it set out to find a solution that could accommodate its business plans without incurring unsustainable overheads.

### The challenge

Mark Routen, Head of IT at H&T explains: “At a business level, we were going through a period of significant growth. Many of our stores had started to open six or seven days a week so IT’s ability to scale at will was an absolute business necessity.”

“However, our ageing server and storage infrastructure was beginning to struggle with capacity and we knew that replacing these components would be costly, time-consuming and potentially disruptive.”

Mark was concerned with the overall infrastructure and commissioned an IT review in order to understand what needed to be refreshed. “I knew that we would benefit from moving to Cloud, specifically Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), because it would allow us to flex scale and performance as we grow and stop us from committing our capital on technology acquisitions that might not be right for us in a few years time.”

Mark undertook an official tender process that included the Richardson Eyres RE Cloud IaaS solution. “Our decision to move to Cloud was obviously something the management team as a whole needed to buy into. Not having our services on site and trusting another external party so implicitly with our operations was a significant cultural change and one we had to convince the board was right for our future.”

### The solution

“In choosing our Cloud partner we were looking for a service provider with superior facilities, skills and a credible client list. We found all these things with RE Cloud, but that was only part of the reason we went with them,” explains Mark. “Richardson Eyres understood the board’s concerns and helped me to present a coherent view of the proposition, supporting the strategy and answering valid commercial and

operational concerns which any company would raise when changing the ethos around delivering services to the business. They also helped me promote the benefits of RE Cloud’s pay-per-use model in addressing our growth ambitions.”

“Richardson Eyres understood the board’s concerns and helped me build the business case for Cloud...”

Finally, with H&T’s commercial and business plans front of mind, Mark felt RE Cloud offered the firm the best all round deal: affordable pricing, scalable, secure IaaS with 99.9% availability, robust Service Level Agreements, including IT performance reporting and contract flexibility. “In the retail environment, it’s never OK to have downtime,” states Mark, “reliable IaaS is as much about management processes as it is about technology and I was impressed with Richardson Eyres’ expertise and approach.”

### The migration plan

Given the retail nature of the business, in particular, required continuous access to IT services, the decision about how to migrate production servers from H&T’s physical premises to RE Cloud was a complex one that resulted in a three-phase action plan.

To ensure high availability, H&T decided to virtualise its network hub and route all traffic through RE Cloud – who were also hosting the server environment. Designing the solution this way removes any single point of failure and provides the retail outlets with a more resilient service.

## The migration journey took the following path:

**Stage 1:** The bespoke hosted network was built and at the same time H&T spun up its first virtualised servers delivering support capabilities such as domain control. Once this phase was proved to be stable and running to SLA, the team embarked on stage two.

**Stage 2:** Test systems were deployed in RE Cloud and we worked extensively with H&T's in-house infrastructure team to ensure build parameters of the virtual infrastructure were optimised. Secure connectivity from RE Cloud to H&T's head office and retail outlets formed a major part of the due diligence and testing too. We owned troubleshooting and resolution tasks to ensure secure, reliable and scalable connections and the process for onboarding stores and remote sites to enable a speedy transmission to the cloud environment.

**Stage 3:** H&T's first hosted production system went live and was monitored for availability and resiliency. The combined team paused at this stage to re-group and plan the next major stages of their Cloud journey.

"We were delighted with the way this early part of the deployment went," notes Mark. "However, culturally, Cloud was a huge departure for us and there was a certain degree of risk aversion within the business – key decision makers wanted to take a considered approach and make sure we were realising the right benefits before continuing – after all, IT was such a big factor in our business success."

On the journey to cloud, as a trusted advisor, we embraced our role as educator, helping Mark promote the benefits of RE Cloud internally with business case justifications and benefits statements about redundancy and resilience. During implementation we provided technical support and expertise facilitating every step of the migration.

## The benefits

"It's essential for any business looking at Cloud to assess the benefits and potential risks of such a fundamental change to its model of IT service delivery. Now we have experienced having our production and development systems managed by RE Cloud we can review the benefits, as follows, and make plans for the next steps in our Cloud journey," concludes Mark.

### Benefits include:

- **Costs** – Mark believes that from a CFO's perspective Cloud may appear to be more expensive than owning equipment for around the first three years of a contract. However, the Total Cost of Ownership is reduced over time due to lower CapEx investment, savings on in-house support, IT housing costs and utility bills and most importantly, time spent on operational tasks such as backups and routine systems administration and providing infinite scope to scale.
- **Agility** – H&T's IT team is now free to spend time developing systems in direct response to business needs and customer demands rather than focusing on infrastructure.
- **Flexibility** – services can be deployed dynamically and only for as long as required. If H&T only need a server for 6 months, they can. RE Cloud's pay-per-use facility allows H&T to adapt rapidly in a highly competitive market without losing out financially.
- **Availability** – as guaranteed, RE Cloud has delivered 99.9% availability and H&T has experienced no server outages.
- **Risk and support** – H&T now utilises Richardson Eyres' support to allow them to focus on core business. In Richardson Eyres, H&T has a trusted partner whose solution mitigates business risk and with whom they can confidently move forward.

## Future

In future, H&T will virtualise all but its most secure servers and migrate them from its HQ to RE Cloud and continue to progress steadily on its Cloud journey, with conviction that they are with the best possible partner for their future success.





## // About Richardson Eyres

Richardson Eyres provide solutions and services to ensure you get the very best return on your technology investment. We work with our customers to provide a combination of customised solutions and services which free up time, resources and ultimately save our customers' money.

We have created RE Cloud from a foundation of 28 years in infrastructure services. In that time we have supported many of the world's largest banks, pharmaceutical companies, law firms, construction companies, software, retail and online businesses.

## // About Harvey & Thompson

H&T is the UK's leading pawnbroking company with significantly more customers and a far higher loanbook than its nearest competitor.

The company has over 180 outlets throughout the UK offering a range of services including pawnbroking, second-hand jewellery sales, cheque cashing, payday advances and unsecured loans.

They trust us because we hold the highest accreditations with the main IT vendors and deliver on our promises. That confidence in our capabilities has translated to the Cloud services division, with both new and existing customers leveraging the portfolio of offerings.

We have grown steadily through reputation and hard work, not through acquisition or private equity. We are a privately owned UK company and debt free.

[www.re-cloud.net](http://www.re-cloud.net)

H&T aims to provide flexible finance options to customers who prefer to deal in cash, enabling them to manage their finances in a simple and affordable way.

[www.handtpawnbrokers.co.uk](http://www.handtpawnbrokers.co.uk)

### Richardson Eyres

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