



Skills Assessment Company uses Cloud to Launch Innovative Solution for Digital Distribution and Verification of Convocation Certificates

Overview

Country or Region: India

Industry: Education

Customer Profile

Founded in 2000, headquartered at Bangalore, India, MeritTrac is India's largest skills assessment company. It is uniquely positioned to be an 'Independent' assessment company that provides quantitative inputs on the talent pool and helps in measuring competencies for specific roles.

Business Situation

MeritTrac wanted to provide a cloud-based solution for secure digital distribution and verification of convocation certificates.

Solution

MeritTrac chose the Windows Azure platform to deploy CertiTrac, India's first technology-led solution for secure digital distribution and verification of convocation certificates.

Benefits

- Reduces customer costs
- Increases scalability
- Reduces management burden
- Provides a secure environment

"CertiTrac will allow our customers to scale out very quickly based on their needs without expensive IT purchases. It provides enterprise-class services that help customers reduce capital and operational costs by as much as 30 percent."

Madan Padaki, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, MeritTrac

MeritTrac, a leading skills assessment company, consistently aims to help its customers by taking advantage of all that technology has to offer. The company developed CertiTrac, a first-of-its-kind service that enables secure digital distribution and verification of convocation certificates, and migrated the application to the Windows Azure Platform. Windows Azure platform offered integrated development tools and less of a management burden than the hosting service from other Data Centre Service providers that MeritTrac was initially using. As a result, MeritTrac can now offer a robust solution to its customers while saving up to 30 percent on on-premises infrastructure costs. The company also gains credibility by offering a solution that utilizes Microsoft's Azure Cloud services, particularly with regard to stability, scalability and ease of management.



“Because Windows Azure is a fully managed cloud platform, our customers would not be saddled with infrastructure management tasks, which would typically prove too costly and time-consuming. Windows Azure gave us a more robust managerial platform.”

Prasanna K, Executive Vice President
Operations, MeritTrac

Situation

MeritTrac is India's largest skills assessment company. It designs and delivers assessments to evaluate knowledge, abilities and skill for corporate, educational institutions, government, and individual customers. Since its inception in 2000, MeritTrac has assessed over 10 million candidates for over 400 clients across industry verticals like BFSI, engineering, FMCG, healthcare, retail, IT, BPO, manufacturing, public sector units and education among others. Headquartered in Bangalore, India, MeritTrac has over 300 fulltime employees and nearly 1000 certified test administrators operating out of offices in all the metros of India.

Over 3 million students graduate every year from the Indian higher education system, ready to either plunge into the job market or pursue further studies. In either case, a degree certificate is required to manifest completion of required minimum qualification.

A research done by MeritTrac on 200 graduates of the 2007 - 2010 batch throws some interesting facts about this process of getting the degree convocation certificate.

- More than 81 percent of the students who have received their degree certificate said that there was a delay in getting their certificate, with 60 percent of them facing a delay of over 6 months.
- About 86 percent students said that they had to do a lot of running around to get their degree certificate.
- Around 23 percent of the students indicated that they faced problems with incorrect information (wrong spelling of names, etc.) in the final certificate that they got.
- A whopping 92 percent respondent expressed their displeasure with the system and felt that that usage of technology will improve the same.

On the other hand, large universities in India that manage a huge pool of graduating students every year were facing a tough time distributing the final convocation degree certificate since they are not collected by all students on a particular day. On top of it, there were rampant practices of fake degree certificates, which hit the headlines every year. As a result, universities constantly struggle to maintain the sanctity of their processes amidst the administrative pressures that they face.

In addition, corporate entities and higher education institutions, often find the process of verification of the certificates submitted by students, to be a time-consuming and tedious process.

It was in this context that MeritTrac decided to bring out another innovation from its stable; a solution created to digitally distribute degree certificates in a secure, quick and student friendly manner, and offer a quick easy process for verification of the convocation certificates.

Solution

In what would become India's first technology-led solution for secure distribution and verification of digital convocation certificates, MeritTrac created CertiTrac, a first-of-its-kind service that enables university graduates to access their certificate online without having to personally visit either the institution or the university.

When CertiTrac was first launched, it was hosted on servers in a Level-III Data Center. But the challenge of managing the solution was taking a toll on the company. IT administration was a significant overhead. “While the Data Center provides

infrastructure as a service, it requires us to manage the software environment,” explains Gopal Kulkarni, Vice President - Technology Solutions Group, MeritTrac. “With Azure we have significantly reduced the overhead in managing the solution because of the automation capabilities provided by the Windows Azure Platform.”

In May 2011, MeritTrac decided to move to the Windows Azure platform, an Internet-scale cloud services platform, hosted at Microsoft data centers. The Windows Azure platform includes a cloud services operating system and a set of developer services, which provide the functionality to build applications that span from consumer Web to enterprise scenarios. Windows Azure and SQL Azure are the key components of the Windows Azure platform.

MeritTrac was impressed by how affordably the platform fitted their needs by offering a scalable infrastructure with flexible pricing models to choose from. “Windows Azure provided both a platform and an infrastructure as a service; freeing us from making any investments, and allowing us to focus on our business, rather than on configuring servers, implementing backups, adding instances, and other administrative tasks,” says Ashok Rajanna, Manager – Technology Solutions Group, MeritTrac. “It brings familiar ease to cloud computing by making complicated tasks simple across a dynamic environment.”

Currently, the move from the Data Center environment to the Windows Azure platform is underway, for a leading University that has already implemented CertiTrac.

Hosted on the cloud, the entire solution is a service offering, which ensures high levels of security, concurrency, and 24 x 7 x 365

availability. As a part of the service offering, MeritTrac would set up a ‘Convocation Certificate Cell’ at the university premises, to handle all the processing activity. This onsite team would act as a bridge between the students and the university officials, to ensure smooth processing of the student applications. At every stage of the process, the candidate is kept informed of the status of his application via emails and SMSes.

CertiTrac also provides an interface for recruiters to instantly verify the Convocation Certificate of candidates seeking employment.

The solution uses the Windows Azure Compute instances for running the application, Azure storage for storing the images (student photos...), SQL Azure for maintaining relational data of all the students.

Satish G, Senior Manager, Industry Solutions Group, of MeritTrac says, “This unique first-of-its-kind service is another example of technology-based services that helps in improving the administrative processes in universities, eases loads and ultimately benefits the students. We are extremely excited about the platform and its possibilities.”

Benefits

CertiTrac on Windows Azure fully satisfies customers’ needs for scalability, reliability, and data protection. In addition, both MeritTrac and its customers benefit from a simplified IT infrastructure and reduced costs in many areas.

Reduces Customer Costs

The move to Windows Azure will save money for MeritTrac customers. By avoiding expensive infrastructure, they will be able to eliminate the charges associated

with maintaining the physical infrastructure, and realize similar savings by eliminating existing hardware. CertiTrac enables them to deploy directly to the cloud without the initial capital outlay required to set up a local IT infrastructure.

"CertiTrac will allow our customers to scale out very quickly based on their needs without expensive IT purchases," says Madan Padaki, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, MeritTrac. "It provides enterprise-class services that help customers reduce capital and operational costs by as much as 30 percent."

Increases Scalability

The application is deployed on the cloud and thereby provides a high level of scalability. It can easily handle very high levels of concurrency and loads, throughout the year. Built around the Service Oriented Architecture, the most contemporary standard for application design, it makes dialogues with heterogeneous systems a cakewalk.

Reduces Management Burden

MeritTrac has noticed significant benefits by migrating to the Azure platform. Prasanna K, Executive Vice President - Operations, MeritTrac says, "Because Windows Azure is a fully managed cloud platform, our customers would not be saddled with infrastructure management tasks, which would typically prove too costly and time-consuming. Windows Azure gave us a more robust managerial platform."

Provides a Secure Environment

MeritTrac and its customers take comfort in knowing that the solution is hosted in state-of-the-art Microsoft data center, which ensure system availability, protection, backup, and recovery of data according to best practices and service level agreements.

Additionally, with secure layers of access and verifications at every stage built into the platform, CertiTrac provides a secure, scalable way of distributing the digital certificates. The automated process of verification and approval by the University officials at the backend eliminates any possibility of delays.

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers in the United States and Canada who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to:

www.microsoft.com

For more information about MeritTrac products and services, call (91) (80) 4013 0200 or visit the Web site at: www.merittrac.com. For specific information about CertiTrac, please email certitrac@merittrac.com.

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Windows Azure Platform

The Windows Azure platform provides an excellent foundation for expanding online product and service offerings. The main components include:

- **Windows Azure.** Windows Azure is the development, service hosting, and service management environment for the Windows Azure platform. Windows Azure provides developers with on-demand compute and storage to host, scale, and manage Web applications on the Internet through Microsoft data centers. In addition, Windows Azure serves developers' connectivity needs through the following services.
- **Microsoft Azure Data Market**
 - DataMarket section of Windows Azure Marketplace, formerly known as Codename Dallas, includes data, imagery, and real-time web services from leading commercial data providers and authoritative public data sources.
- **Windows Azure platform AppFabric.** With Windows Azure platform AppFabric, developers can build and manage applications more easily both on-premises and in the cloud.
 - The **AppFabric Service Bus** connects services and applications across network boundaries to help developers build distributed applications.
 - The **AppFabric Access Control** provides federated, claims-based access control for REST Web services.
- **Microsoft SQL Azure.** Microsoft SQL Azure offers the first cloud-based

relational and self-managed database service built on Microsoft SQL Server 2008 technologies.

To learn more about the Windows Azure platform, visit:

www.windowsazure.com

Software and Services

- Windows Azure Platform

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