# TCM Living: cloud-based DR with Skytap on Azure

**With no easy recovery option for a business-critical legacy ERP system running on outdated IBM Power hardware, TCM Living faced the risk of significant disruption in the event of a disaster recovery (DR) scenario. Working with Northdoor, the company has successfully created a native DR instance within Skytap on the Azure cloud, facilitating rapid recovery without the need for ongoing investments in new on-premises hardware.**

## About TCM Living

TCM Living is a UK-based designer and manufacturer of high-quality, high-fashion furniture. Combining artisan skills with modern production techniques, TCM Living creates beautiful sofas that consistently match its customers' high expectations. The company unites four leading UK sofa brands: Ashley Manor, Alstons, Alexander & James, and AMX Design.

## Building a resilient infrastructure

Like many other businesses that have grown through acquisition, TCM Living has a diverse infrastructure and software landscape. The company is working to streamline its IT portfolio, because the existing environment spreads the available budget too thinly over multiple parallel skillsets and technologies.

One particular point of concern was the resilience of a business-critical ERP system. Nik Hall, CIO at TCM Living, explains: "We had inherited a 20-year-old ERP system, running on an out-of-support version of AIX and on old IBM POWER5 hardware. With only one physical server, there were major concerns about how we would recover from our backups in the event of a disaster."

TCM Living has a cloud-first strategy, and had successfully migrated much of its x86 server landscape to the Microsoft Azure cloud. The company did not want to invest in new on-premises hardware – not least because AIX on Power does not have a long-term future at TCM Living. While it continues working on a new group-wide ERP solution, TCM Living needed to keep the inherited system running during the transition – and beyond, as a source of historical business data.

"We were looking for a cost-effective way to keep this legacy system running, and above all we wanted to avoid buying new Power hardware," says Nik Hall. "We were already working with Northdoor to support another Power environment, and we asked them to help us solve this challenge too."

## Smooth, low-risk migration

Northdoor reviewed TCM Living's requirements, and determined that the optimal solution would be to create a native DR landscape on IBM Power hardware in the Skytap cloud. Skytap is a global solution provider that works with Microsoft Azure to provide flexible IBM Power capacity in the public cloud.

"Northdoor did a great job of understanding our complex, multi-site network and designing a solution that would allow employees across three of our companies to connect securely to the failover instance of the ERP in the cloud," says Nik Hall. "Choosing Northdoor helped to reduce the risk and timelines for the project, and the Northdoor consultants also did sterling work in reconfiguring our existing Power server to correct some long-standing networking problems."

Northdoor drew on its AIM (advise, implement, manage) methodology to manage this transformation project for TCM Living. Following an initial discovery and documentation phase, the Northdoor consultants created a high-level phased implementation plan and set up regular project meetings with TCM Living to manage the execution of the plan.

"The proof-of-concept exercise helped convince us that Skytap was the right option," recalls Nik Hall. "There was still quite a lot of work to do: for example, we had to upgrade the cloud environment to a later version of AIX. That ran very smoothly, thanks to all the testing carried out by Northdoor and the clear instructions they provided for our in-house technicians."

## Proven solution

TCM Living continues to run the production ERP system on-premises, with an automated process to send changes to the cloud-based DR environment daily. Northdoor added SLAs to the company's existing ServiceLine support contract to cover the Skytap cloud environment. TCM Living's plan is to maintain the cloud instance of its legacy ERP system even after it has migrated to a new ERP system, so that business users can access historical sales, production and finance data.

"We've completed a test failover to the Skytap cloud, and we're confident that we've significantly reduced our risk of disruption in the event of a failure in the production environment," says Nik Hall. "There are a few things that still require manual workarounds, because there are other local connections to the legacy environments that we've not replicated in the cloud. Of course, it would be possible to move the whole production landscape to the Skytap cloud, but we concluded that it would not be cost-effective for an ERP system that we're actively migrating away from."

## Technical expertise brings confidence

The migration to Skytap on Azure has fully delivered on TCM Living's primary objective: to enable the rapid recovery of its business-critical ERP environment in the event of a failure. Northdoor's recommended approach also enabled the company to avoid committing capital to new on-premises hardware; instead, TCM Living can flex the capacity of its cloud environment up or down as required, paying a proportionate monthly fee as it goes.

"Northdoor were absolutely spot-on when it came to the skills for this transformation project," says Nik Hall. "As a mid-sized company, a lot of our success is based on finding external suppliers that we can trust to deliver the skills we need. The Northdoor consultants really have the deep technical skills we need in AIX and Power, but they've also been great people to work with in terms of the day-to-day experience."

While TCM Living works to design and deploy its new ERP landscape, Northdoor will provide high-quality reactive support for the legacy AIX and Power environment: both on-premises and in the Skytap cloud. Following the success of this project, TCM Living has engaged Northdoor to help move two IBM i workloads into the Skytap cloud.

"The Northdoor solution has given us much-needed breathing space as we work on our ERP migration," says Nik Hall. "We benefit from Northdoor's technical expertise and from their status as partners for both Skytap and Microsoft Azure, which makes managing the solution very simple. Thanks to Northdoor, what was once a major concern and cause of sleepless nights is now an environment that we're fully confident about."

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