

Hunt Consolidated, Inc. Selects AWS and apiphani for SAP Business Warehouse



Executive Summary

SAP Business Warehouse Migration to AWS, Upgrade to S4/HANA, Performance Optimization, Managed Services

Hunt Consolidated needed to upgrade an SAP Business Warehouse appliance that was approaching end of life. The upgrade was an opportunity to start shifting the company's processes to the cloud, but Hunt lacked the skills and experience in-house, suggesting that it would be best to engage with a managed service provider to handle the transition and manage the applications afterward.

Hunt Consolidated first choose to work with another managed service provider, thinking that apiphani was too small to support Hunt's needs. After two years, when the initial service provider failed to deliver on its promises, Hunt turned to apiphani.

Challenges

- No in-house experience moving critical systems to the cloud
- No in-house experience with SAP HANA
- Previous systems integrator had failed, after two years of work, to deliver on its promises to upgrade, migrate, and manage Hunt's SAP systems

Results

- Greater than 99.9% availability
- No major systems outages in years
- Reduced expenses
- Success of the initial project has led to an expansion of the engagement with apiphani

Situation

For Hunt Consolidated, Inc., a leading oil exploration and production company based in Dallas, Texas, the need to upgrade an SAP Business Warehouse (BW) appliance that was approaching end of life was an opportunity to start shifting the company's processes to the cloud. "This was the first time we had an opportunity to try hosting in the cloud," said Greg Hoffman, manager of Enterprise Business Systems and Business Intelligence at Hunt Consolidated. The company's SAP BW instance "is a production system, so it was a good test case."

About Hunt Consolidated



One of the largest privately held companies in the United States, Dallas-based Hunt Consolidated, Inc., is the flagship entity of the entire Hunt family of companies, which are active in oil and gas exploration and production, refining, LNG, power, real estate, investments, ranching, and infrastructure.

For more than 80 years, Hunt has been a leader in oil exploration and production, beginning as a modest, family-owned regional exploration company and growing to become a large, international company, capable of operating successfully anywhere in the world.



Challenges

Hunt's long-term goal was to improve the company's use of SAP software in order to perform mission-critical operations. The performance of Hunt's on-premise SAP systems – clearly at their end of life – was no longer keeping up with demand, leaving users waiting whenever they tried to access information. “Because it took so long for reports to run, users would hit enter, go home, and then come back in the morning,” said Diane Schwarz, a longtime CIO who was working with Hunt at the time.

After an extensive procurement process, Hunt Consolidated initially selected a larger systems integrator (SI) instead of apiphani to handle the upgrade to HANA, the cloud migration, and on-going managed services once the application was in the cloud. Two years later, when the SI remained unable to deliver on its promises, Hunt Consolidated reengaged with apiphani, exploring how apiphani would be different from its current provider.

The answer was straightforward: Apiphani offered a new approach to mission critical. Apiphani's decades of experience in SAP, combined with Deep Automation™ and machine learning, would enable apiphani to drive extreme efficiency and reliability in support of Hunt's mission-critical workloads. Because Deep Automation works to prevent outages before they happen, this would lead to greater system availability, and, because apiphani's assigned client team wouldn't need to play firefighter on outages, they could devote more time to providing better and more strategic service to Hunt.

Solution

Hunt engaged apiphani to run a proof of concept for Business Warehouse in a cloud environment. As Hunt had little direct experience with HANA, apiphani's extensive SAP expertise was an important factor in the project. The proof of concept involved a “lift and shift” of the on-premise BW instance to the AWS cloud in order to see if a version running in the cloud would cause problems.

“I had some concerns about latency to the cloud,” explained Hoffman, concerns that were eased by the results of the test. “We liked the like-to-like test,” Hoffman noted. “It was clear at that point we would see material improvements just from [having apiphani] tuning the systems we had. After we finished the test and saw that it would work, we started immediately on the project.”



AWS was the best choice of cloud platform for Hunt's needs. SAP and AWS had worked together since 2011 to certify AWS for production deployments of SAP applications, platforms, and databases. This enables organizations such as Hunt, who rely on SAP for their business-critical applications, to accelerate time-to-value, improve operational and cost efficiencies, and operate more securely than on-premises.

With the pilot complete, the next step was to migrate the entire BW environment to AWS, including the sandbox, QA, and production system, and then fully upgrade the system, including HANA and the associated NetWeaver stack. The AWS solution included specialized EC2 instances for HANA, EBS, S3 and other AWS services.

Results

The result was an SAP Business Warehouse system that significantly improved the company's business processes. According to Hoffman, the level of service apiphani provided was outstanding, a type of service typically reserved for much larger firms and accounts.

Apiphani's ability to provide comprehensive ongoing support services in a proactive manner allows those kinds of process improvements to be sustainable, Hoffman added. One reason is apiphani's ability to automate a significant portion of the continuous monitoring of Hunt's processes and anticipate where bottlenecks or other problems might occur, and then act on them before the business user sees a problem and IT has to open a trouble ticket. "I used to monitor our system with some ad hoc tools I created. I don't have to do that anymore," said Hoffman. "Most of the trouble tickets are created by their system, identifying problems we hadn't seen yet."

This is a major improvement over the older system. "We had two or three times every year when we could just crash in the middle of the day," Hoffman said. "Since working with apiphani we've had none."

Importantly, the impact of apiphani's support services accrue to the entire company, not just the IT department. "The improvements aren't just on the backend," Hoffman explained. "The users noticed the differences too. It wasn't uncommon for multiple people to reach out to me and complement our team."

One of the key benefits of engaging with apiphani was the creation of a more "resilient SAP environment" that allowed her team to no longer be "shackled to taking care of the backend and [responding] to emergencies and outages." Improving the company's use of SAP software in order to perform mission-critical operations was another. Users no longer had to wait overnight for reports to run. "Once



apiphani got to work, [users could] hit enter, get a cup of coffee, and come right back. That allowed them to move on to more valuable work.”

The ability to better leverage key line of business and operational staff provided lasting value to the company. Schwarz was able to put her team to work solving problems that were more important and, by their nature, more interesting for these employees to be involved in as well. “I was able to tell them to take your hands off the keyboard and put your brain and voice to work.”

Importantly, the impact of apiphani’s work extended well beyond Schwarz’s IT team. “We had users who said ‘thank you for whatever magic you did because our stuff runs faster now.’”

Hunt Consolidated’s relationship with apiphani has grown tremendously since then. Apiphani now supports Hunt’s SAP ECC (ERP Central Component) environments in Dallas and Peru, as well as over 400 non-SAP servers. Apiphani monitors all these systems using its Deep Automation technology, providing software maintenance for operating systems, databases, and applications, along with operational support comprising backup and recovery, system monitoring, virus protection, and technical help desk support for SAP infrastructure. Apiphani’s Luumen portal enables Hunt to get a comprehensive overview of how its systems are performing.

For the future, Hunt Consolidated plans to move its Dallas SAP ECC environment to RISE with SAP next year, and apiphani will be an integral part of that move, both ensuring a smooth transition and building the surrounding application interfaces essential to Hunt’s mission-critical operations.

About Apiphani

Apiphani is a global leader in automated mission-critical application management. Founded by recognized industry leaders, apiphani is dedicated to helping businesses minimize the effort and risk associated with managing tier one applications. By integrating decades of experience with Deep Automation™ and machine learning, apiphani is able to drive extreme efficiency and reliability in support of its clients' most vital workloads. For more information visit www.apiphani.io

