Transforming IT Infrastructure at the Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS)

Overview

The Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS), a leading nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and families faced significant challenges stemming from an outdated IT infrastructure. Operating for years with outdated technology had severely impacted CHS, leaving its IT team overwhelmed and trapped in a cycle of maintaining and protecting a fragile system. This constant strain not only drained resources but also stalled progress on critical initiatives that were essential to advancing the organization's mission of helping children and families in need.

Faced with mounting challenges from years of using outdated technology, CHS recognized that a digital transformation was no longer optional—it was essential. Seeking a trusted partner to guide this critical shift, CHS joined forces with ION247, a Pavion Company, to embark on a bold 21-month tech refresh to modernize their IT infrastructure. This collaboration became more than just a technical undertaking; it was a pivotal moment for the organization. With ION247's expertise, CHS overhauled its IT infrastructure and restored CHS's capacity to focus on what truly mattered: advancing the mission to improve the lives of children and families.

> This was one of the heaviest lifts I've ever experienced in my 30 years in IT, but the results speak for themselves. With ION247's expertise and unwavering commitment, we've achieved a level of agility and efficiency that seemed out of reach before. Our IT team can now focus on what matters most—empowering CHS to better serve children and families across Florida.
>
> **Marcus Johnson** | *CIO of Children's Home Society of Florida*

Challenges

Before the project began, CHS's IT environment suffered from several critical issues:

- **Outdated Technology:** 130 servers and 135 databases spread across outdated systems.
- **Operational Inefficiency:** IT resources were consumed by maintenance, leaving no bandwidth for strategic growth.
- **High Risk and Costs:** CHS faced escalating operational costs, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and the looming expense of replacing outdated hardware.
- **Impact on Mission:** With IT focused solely on keeping systems running, CHS struggled to align technology with its broader organizational goals.

Solutions

Recognizing the need for a trusted partner to navigate this complex transformation, CHS partnered with ION247 to co-manage the Data Center Migration project. The collaboration focused on planning, designing, and executing a cloud migration strategy that would modernize CHS's IT infrastructure and eliminate technical debt.

Key elements of the solution included:

- **Infrastructure Overhaul:** Downsizing from 130 servers to 18 and reducing databases from 135 to 8.

- **Cloud Migration:** Migrating 95% of the infrastructure to the cloud, with the remaining 5% moved to a new physical location without incurring hardware costs.

- **Cybersecurity Enhancements:** Implementing advanced cybersecurity tools and awareness training, significantly reducing reportable security incidents.

- **Disaster Recovery:** Establishing a robust disaster recovery system for the first time.

- **IT Process Improvements:** Automating asset tracking and improving IT work order performance by 93%.
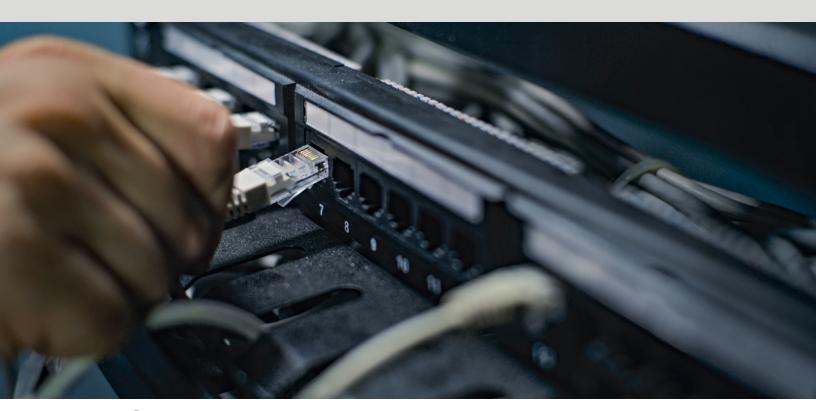
Results

The project achieved significant technical and business benefits for CHS:

- **Smaller IT Footprint:** Reduced server count by 86% and database count by 94%.
- **Cost Savings:**
  - $116,000 reduction in existing IT services costs, despite adding $143,000 in new services.
  - $250,000 in annual operational savings, freeing funds for CHS programs.
  - Avoided $1 million in future hardware expenses.
- **Improved Operational Efficiency:**
  - IT now dedicates 30-40% of its efforts to strategic business process improvements, up from 0%.
  - Objective performance metrics implemented across all IT functions.
- **Enhanced Security:**
  - 142 consecutive days without a reportable security incident as of June 2023.
- **Strategic Focus:** IT leadership can now prioritize applications, data, and business process improvements that directly support CHS's mission.

Key Success Factors

The success of this project can be attributed to:

- **Partnership and Co-Management:** The collaboration between CHS and ION247 ensured seamless execution. Key contributors included Chris Davis, Peter Culp, and Raymond Villiers from ION247 and Gary Lewis, John Dean, and Marcus Johnson from CHS.
- **Innovative Solutions:** ION247 provided expertise in cloud migration, cybersecurity, and infrastructure redesign, ensuring the project's goals were met.
- **Leadership and Commitment:** Under the leadership of Marcus Johnson, CHS's CIO, the IT team embraced the transformation with dedication and teamwork.

Business Impact

The transformative impact of the Data Center Migration project extended beyond IT:

- CHS leadership now views IT as a strategic enabler rather than a maintenance function.
- Improved IT performance and reduced costs allow CHS to invest more in its core mission.
- The new infrastructure provides a foundation for future innovations, enhancing CHS's ability to adapt to changing business needs.
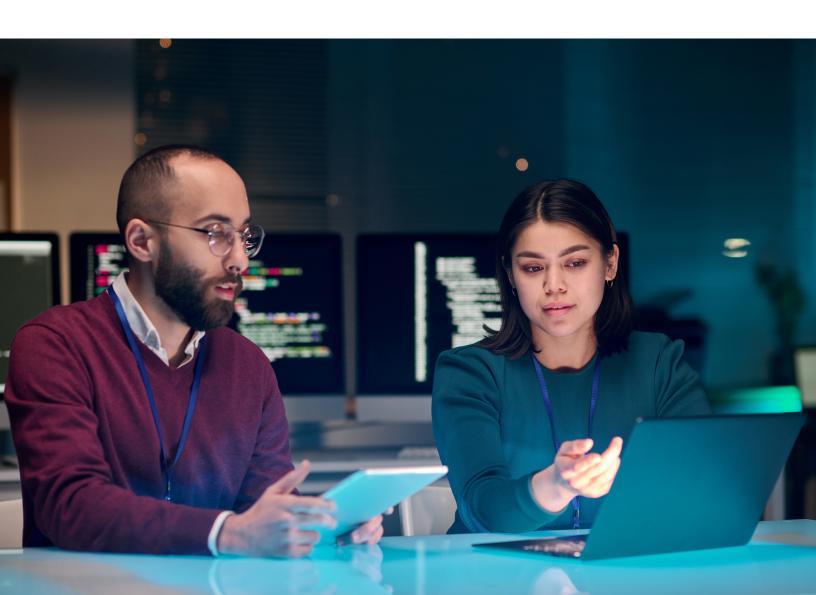
Looking Ahead

With its IT foundation revitalized, CHS is well-positioned to leverage its infrastructure for continued innovation and efficiency. Future initiatives will focus on business process improvements, enhanced data management, and further alignment of IT with CHS's mission.

The CHS-ION247 partnership serves as a model for other organizations facing similar challenges, showcasing the power of collaboration and the transformative potential of strategic IT modernization.

For more information about how ION247 can help your organization achieve similar results, visit ION247's website.

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