

Safeguarding the future of next generation applications for Target Professional Services.

Overview.

Target Professional Services is best known for being a global leader in data verification and trace solutions for pensions schemes, financial services, and government authorities. For over 30 years, Target Professional Services has provided innovation in data privacy and information security – consistently achieving the highest accuracy and success rates in the industry, to the envy of its peers.

To ensure they have the right platform for the pace of innovation, Target Professional Services wanted a health check of their cloud-based customer facing and internal applications. This was to determine any improvements that could be made to bring them in line with current industry best practices. They decided on an AWS Well-Architected Review with ECS.

Customer Quote.

"I am very impressed with the work that ECS undertook to not only carry out the AWS Well-Architected Review, but also the remediation of our AWS Cloud Estate. ECS proved to be good listeners who sought to understand not only our immediate needs but our aspirations as well.

We wanted to enhance our journey into the cloud and chose ECS to deliver the AWS Well-Architected review. With their team of skilled consultants, we were walked through each step of the Well-Architected Framework, understanding the value this would have to our business stakeholders and customers. Once we knew where we were in our journey, ECS helped develop a plan to address the gaps and executed on that plan to apply controls to support and govern our environment.

I particularly liked the daily 10-minute huddles that covered off yesterday's progress, issues discovered and fixed along the way, as well as today's goals. This meant we were aligned every step of the way and were able to steer the project to achieve, not only what ECS had agreed to do, but also many other smart engineering improvements they chose to undertake whilst they had the bonnet up.

Great progress, great value and a wishlist of minor issues that we can now address ourselves. Oh and 2 x \$5k of AWS credit awarded because of the significant leap forward we made in Security, Compliance and Scalability.

Lessons learnt include not to put out to tender and settle for the keenest price. ECS got much more done and to a smarter and higher standard in a massively shorter period than any team we have used up until now.

As a result of this successful engagement, we have identified a partner we can work with in the future, and we have an environment that is optimised for our customers' journey."

Head of Compliance, Target Professional Services

The Challenge.

In anticipation of an upcoming application launch, Target Professional Services were keen to arm themselves with visibility over their application ecosystem. Familiar with the AWS toolset, ECS was invited to conduct an AWS Well-Architected Review as a first step to test and safeguard security in their application landscape. Faced with compliance obligations, Target Professional Services were equally interested in understanding the operational resilience of their solution and its ability to scale applications whilst manage costs.

Another challenge was consolidating siloed AWS accounts into one centrally managed platform. Target Professional Services were also keen for ECS, as AWS experts, to educate them and their third-party partners in understanding best practices for operating applications in the cloud.

The Solution.

You don't know what you don't know, which is why ECS approached the engagement with an architectural assessment that would provide a health check of Target Professional Services cloud services. Otherwise known as an AWS Well-Architected Review, this review enabled us to impartially review the client's cloud architecture and offer a detailed 1:1 consultation and recommendations. These recommendations included user stories to demonstrate what the solution would look like, as well as an order of priority. We highlighted items that were a risk and/or activity that could be grouped and tackled together – the two birds, one stone approach.

In particular, Target Professional Services asked ECS to investigate two applications – mypensionID and Apollo CRM – along with the AWS platform in its entirety. Each being data rich and with global reach, Target Professional Services couldn't afford any outages or security breaches and were extremely vigilant when it came to any interfaces integrated with the app's infrastructure.

ECS's review identified several improvements that could directly improve the reliability and security of the applications and align Target Professional Services to the AWS Well-Architected Framework best practices. We set out a program of work over 12 days and dropped in a team of engineers to work through the scope of work agreed. This scope included:

- Creating a centralised governance of all AWS accounts, to help manage cloud-associated costs across the business,
- Introducing a more sophisticated monitoring capability with varying alarms and notifications,
- Maximising the scalability of the platform,
- Remediating configuration drift between Infrastructure as Code and the deployments,
- Introducing AWS best practices to strengthen security,
- Removing resources no longer used but being charged for.

What value did ECS bring?

Nobody likes having their operations audited. It can feel invasive and problematic for those who work closely on the projects in question. Knowing this, ECS approaches each Well-Architected Review with the upmost delicacy and respect for our client's privacy. Because every customer journey is a journey for ECS too.

We take each project personally, working alongside the client to give them the flexibility and confidence they need for us to work without friction. In this instance, our expertise with AWS and unrivalled experience in the Financial Services space gave us an advantage – we knew exactly what we were looking for and how to navigate a heavily regulated environment. This meant that during the audit, we were able to drop in with no interference to day-to-day activity, and during the delivery of service, we could truly maximise the infrastructure already in place, and recommend new tools that would help Target Professional Services reach their goals faster.

Check-ins with key stakeholders happened at least three times a week, giving both parties the opportunity to review progress, flag any blockers and resolve these in a timely manner so no delays were incurred. Another benefit of these sessions was that it enabled ECS to proactively bring attention to items which, whilst beyond the original scope, could be solved during the engagement, or added to a backlog with a recommendation about how best to move forward with the fix.

Project Deliverables.

Over the project, ECS helped Target Professional Services scale and manage its existing applications and increase reliability and performance to secure any future applications they want to deploy on to the platform. Greater visibility has also enabled Target Professional Services to demonstrate with more clarity how they manage and govern their environments – a common question from new customers.

Key benefits include:

- Centralised governance of all AWS accounts and centralised billing – including enforcing strong password policies, single sign-on with MFA, least privilege access, encryption at rest, key rotation, and automated patching,
- Improved the Security Hub score by more than 60 percentage points against AWS Foundational Best Practices for all of Target Professional Services applications,
- Implemented Tagging policy coupled with Cost and Usage reports to improve visibility into AWS spend,
- Complete visibility of the entire environment – mitigating the scope of potential risks to Target Professional Services upcoming application,
- A personalised monitoring dashboard with data analysis and incident monitoring,
- Fixed configuration drift between Infrastructure-as-Code and manual deployments,
- Brought non-production environments in line with production which allows new integrations to be made in a seamless manner,
- An AWS financial service credit of \$10,000 (\$5k per app) for Target Professional services.



If you too could benefit from an independent partner analysing and reviewing your applications against AWS best practice, book in for an AWS Well-Architected Review with ECS. If you book soon, you may also be eligible for a \$5,000 AWS financial service credit.

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