

NIFAST EMBRACES MICROSOFT CLOUD

[Nifast Corporation](#) provides global solutions for fastening components and automotive parts. They opened in 1987 and provide global supply chain solutions for their customers. Nifast maintains thirteen warehouses in seven countries around the globe.

Nifast's Information Technology (IT) platform was based upon Microsoft software, running on server hardware in an on-premises data center they managed. The solution leveraged legacy versions of Microsoft Dynamics Navision, SQL Server, Microsoft Office and Citrix XenApp. All offices were connected via an MPLS network and the servers were replicated to a co-location facility for redundancy.

This legacy solution provided a stable platform and a long life, but Nifast began facing several issues as the software and hardware aged. The Navision solution had been highly customized to support their business, and as a result, became very time consuming and costly to upgrade. Even operating system updates became difficult to deploy as they sometimes interfered with Navision functionality. As time went by, the software became several versions old, making updates more and more difficult and eventually the software became unsupported by Microsoft. The risk of security breaches and component failures increased.

Nifast wished to leverage the capabilities of the latest Microsoft software (Navision, SQL Server, and Office) to provide a more reliable platform and more effectively manage their IT environment. They also wanted to remove the operational burden of maintaining a physical infrastructure.

Nifast engaged [Cloud 9 Infosystems Inc.](#), a Microsoft Cloud Platform Gold Partner, to envision, plan and execute a modernization of their systems-one that extensively leverages public cloud computing. Cloud 9 was an ideal partner for Nifast, given their expertise with both Microsoft Dynamics and Microsoft Cloud. Founded by Chetan Malavia, an ex-Microsoft Dynamics General Manager, Cloud 9 provides end-to end services for organizations migrating to public cloud.

Nifast and Cloud 9 collaborated to envision a future IT approach that would support Nifast's evolving business. The vision focused on continual service improvement, where Nifast services and systems are proactively updated and IT costs are more predictable. All systems would be provided as a service to Nifast and no server hardware would be located on-premises. Users would be able to access systems from their laptop connecting from anywhere on the Internet.

A two phase approach was developed to ensure a smooth migration and not interrupt day-to-day business activities. Phase one focused on migrating all Nifast users to Office 365, leveraging an E3 subscription. This eliminated the server infrastructure supporting email and file sharing while greatly increasing the user productivity through the mobile and collaborative capabilities provided with the Office 365 subscription. In phase two, a migration methodology was planned, tested and executed to move from a legacy, on-premises ERP solution to Microsoft Azure.

Phase two was much more involved, because it also included the upgrade of their ten year old, highly customized Navision environment to the latest version. This required extensive planning, code conversion and testing. Cloud 9 designed, tested and implemented an Azure configuration that provides reliable service and is designed to handle a regional Azure outage.

Post migration, Nifast has leveraged Cloud 9 for management of their cloud infrastructure. Cloud 9 performs regular proactive maintenance, actively monitors the systems and provides reactive administration and support. All issues with Microsoft, both software and cloud services, are handled by Cloud 9 personnel.

With the elimination of on-premises hardware, combined with features of Microsoft Cloud and managed services from Cloud 9, Nifast has greatly improved their IT capability. Benefits include:

Security – Access to the Azure virtual machines is limited to Nifast locations and all communication is encrypted. Microsoft Cloud meets or exceeds all required data center security certifications.

Mobility – User can run their applications from any computer with Internet connectivity. All users use their same Office 365 credentials to access all systems.

Scalability – Computing capacity can be increased or decreased within minutes to accommodate load. User licenses can be add/removed/moved in minutes.

Agility – New applications or services and can be tested and deployed quickly and at minimal cost. Nifast IT resources can focus on new opportunities.

Operations – Cloud 9 monitors and maintains the Azure environment. They also provide reactive administration and support, including after business hours support through global delivery capability.

Legacy On Premises	Cloud Replacement
Network and Server Infrastructure	Microsoft Azure
Office 2003 via Citrix	Office 2016 Online Office 2016 on laptop Office 2016 via Azure RemoteApp
Exchange 2007	Exchange Online
File Server	SharePoint Online
Active Directory	Windows Azure Active Directory
NAV 3.7 client on Citrix	NAV 2015 on Azure Virtual Machines Azure RemoteApp