Softwerx: CIF's Code of Practice Certification Enhanced our Business

Cloud Industry Forum (CIF) Certification gave fresh perspective to Cloud Service Provider

softwerx

Certification

The CIF Self Certification process, managed by APM Group, enables Cloud Service Providers to demonstrate transparency, accountability and capability to end users in a manner that enables the potential customer to make an informed decision about what the vendor offers. The use of the CIF Certification Mark on a vendor's website serves two clear purposes: it makes a public declaration of professional and commercial intent on the part of the cloud service provider and it provides a visual mark of recognition that engenders confidence in the end user that the organisation is open and professional in its commercial activities.

Softwerx

Softwerx is a dynamic IT services company specialising in the design, migration and support of hosted and cloud solutions.

Based in Cambridge, with strategic partnerships with vendors such as Microsoft and Rise, Softwerx offers its customers an unparalleled level of support and service in delivering IT solutions, on-premise or as hosted or cloud services.

With extensive experience, an enviable reputation and a solid track record in supporting organisations in the not-for-profit, legal and service industries, Softwerx is well positioned to assist organisations in the expansion of their IT services.

Softwerx has helped many organisations take advantage of cloud computing including Help for Heroes, Fauna and Flora International and Greenwich-based law firm, Grant Saw.

David Smart, MD at Softwerx comments: "Cloud computing and particularly Infrastructure-as-a-Service is our core business. As in any industry or marketplace a professional accreditation can help to distinguish those that are serious. Cloud is the lifeblood of the business so we are keen to continuously improve. Critical to this is the need for end users to have faith and trust in their service provider. This is why we looked at the CIF Code of Practice, we felt that its Certification would add real commercial benefit to the organisation."

Certification Process

Gaining Self-Certification to the Cloud Service Providers Forum's Code of Practice enables Cloud Service Providers (CSP) such as Softwerx to demonstrate transparency, accountability and capability to end users in a manner that enables the potential customer to make an informed decision about what the vendor offers.

David Smart talks through the experience: "With a market looking for clear guidance to measure suppliers against, the Code of Practice and the Certification process is essential in building trust and is therefore an initiative that we wholeheartedly recommend."

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"Certification has attracted new customers, and our current client base certainly recognise the effort"

About the Cloud Industry Forum (CIF)

The Cloud Industry Forum (CIF) was established in direct response to the evolving supply models for the delivery of software and IT services that has expanded well beyond the traditional on-premise method to one that now embraces hosted and/ or, pay-as-you-use Cloud solutions.

CIF's purpose is twofold: To drive a common and public level of transparency about the capability, substance and best practices of online Service Providers (SaaS, PaaS, IaaS, Web hosting providers etc) through a process of Self Certification to a Code of Practice. Second, this Code of Practice, and the use of the related Certification Mark on participant's web sites, will provide comfort and promote trust to business and individuals wishing to leverage the commercial, financial and agile operations capabilities that the Cloud based and hosted solutions can offer. CIF will ensure the integrity and governance of the Self Certification process through regular random audits as well as investigate complaints from parties that challenge any specific participants Self Certification status.

"Softwerx already holds many accreditations including ISO9001, ISO27001, ISO14001, ISO18001, we also hold Impact Level 2 Security Clearance and have many Microsoft Competencies including a number of Gold Awards. There is no doubt in my mind that having these accreditations is an advantage, but not absolutely essential. The application process is demanding and requires significant resources. We created a dedicated project manager overseeing the process and we would suggest that anyone undertaking Certification to do the same.

"Overall the project team both at Softwerx and the team at APM Group worked well and the process gave us the opportunity to carry out a working audit of our protocols, management systems and procedures," he added.

"The certification application does have a six month time out window. We only required a four-month timeframe, but I would urge anyone going through Certification not to underestimate the required commitment. That said, we had considerable support and guidance from APM Group, CIF's accreditation partner, which not only clarified certain areas of the process but also explained the rationale in such a way that we adopted elements for our own systems and processes to further benefit our clients."

The benefits

David Smart continues: "It has certainly been worth it on two counts. Perhaps most importantly it has actually changed the way we think and work. For example, as a result of going through the process we have actually revised our Hosting Services Agreement so that it now picks up and addresses many of the concerns that businesses may have, making it more transparent. We have also formalised our systematic migration process. We have been migrating businesses to the cloud for a few years, but rather than just do it, now we explain to customers at the outset how we are going to migrate them. In short, we are demonstrating our capability and commitment in an upfront and transparent way, not just saying 'trust us'.

"Certification has attracted new customers, and our current client base certainly recognise the effort. We have also found ourselves actually supporting other (much larger) IT organisations that are themselves just cutting their teeth in the cloud, as it were.

"Raising our profile has also been an obvious benefit, but anyone looking for a quick influx of leads from a new badge/certificate should be wary. It's a comprehensive process that takes a lot of effort; at least it is if you really want to get something out of it. We never saw it as a marketing short-cut to success, we saw it as core to our operation and in this sense we hoped it would improve our business," he concluded.

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