



The Power of the Cloud:

A Unique Cloud
Journey to Minimize
Risk and Maximize
Growth Opportunities

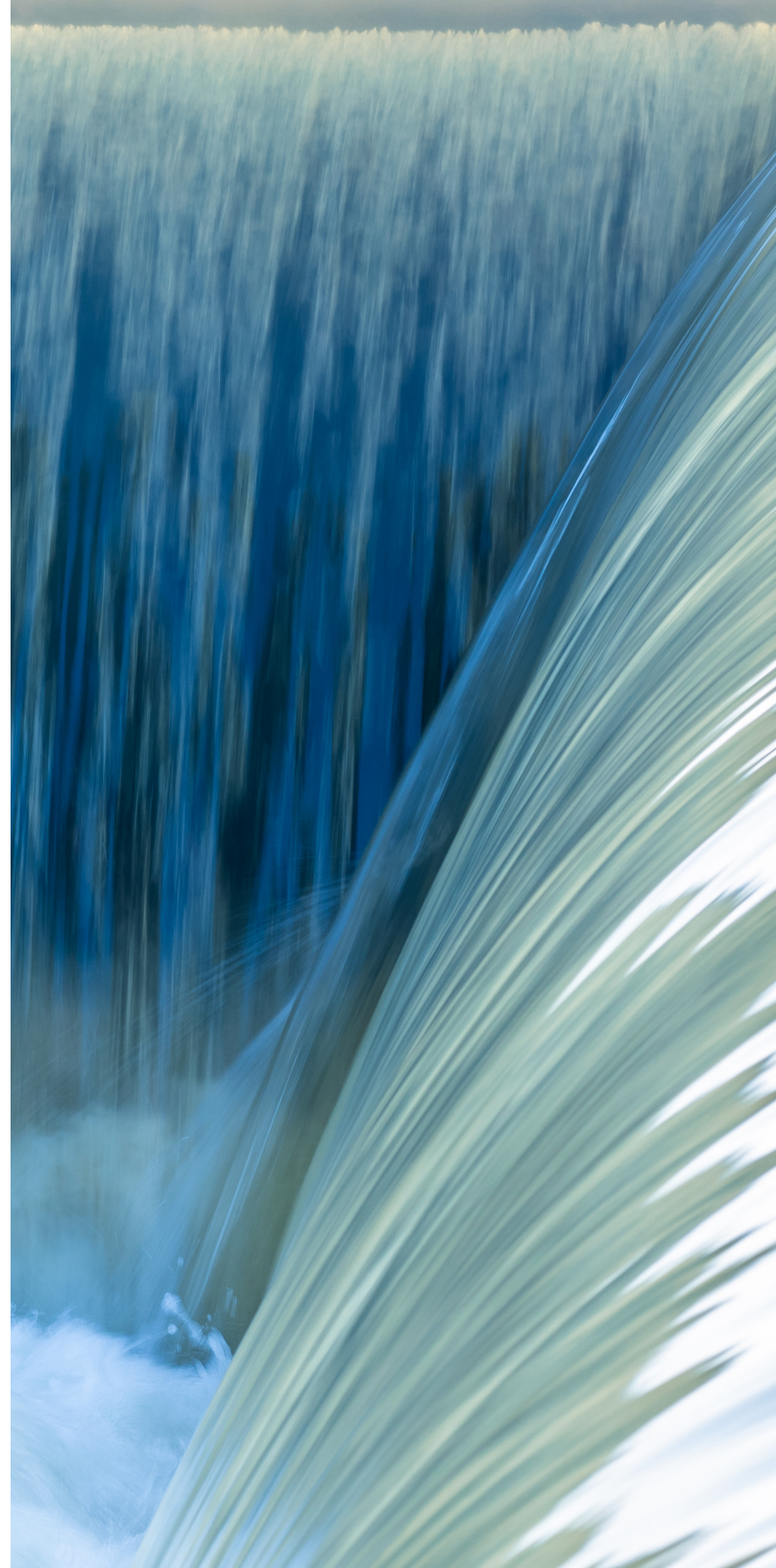

softchoice



With an unexpected shift in business strategy, the IT team at H2O Power seized an opportunity to transform their technology environment. Together with Softchoice, the regional power generation company is moving forward on their cloud journey with less risk and more opportunities to transform and scale.

“We needed something different – for our industry, for our business and for our people. Softchoice not only helped us start our journey to the cloud, but they continue to help us get there in a way that is uniquely our own.”

Ken Williamson,
IT Manager, H2O Power





LET THERE BE LIGHT

Most of us take electricity for granted. We expect a room to light up when we flick a switch and we are surprised if it doesn't happen.

In North America, much of the electricity we consume comes from hydropower generation plants; 35% of electricity in the United States and 63% in Canada is derived from harnessing the energy of rushing water.



The Customer

H2O Power, a hydropower generation company, owns and operates plants in Canada and the northeastern United States.



The Original Ask

With a growth-through-acquisition business strategy, H2O Power needed build a blueprint for the fast on-boarding of new companies that would meet stringent security and reliability needs.



The Softchoice Value

With upfront planning, a business objectives mindset and deep dives with architects and subject matter experts Softchoice created a roadmap that is unique to H2O, enabling the fulfillment of a cloud mandate designed to deliver true business value.



Information technology is as critical as operational technology for a power company

The power-generation industry is highly specialized, and highly risk-averse when it comes to change and the adoption of new technology.

Ken Williamson, the Manager of IT at H2O Power, explains it like this: “We work in a very change-averse environment, where we deal with OT (Operational Technology). With standard IT, we’re always patching or fixing things. OT is the exact opposite. The systems that govern the opening and closing of valves to allow flow of water have to deliver safe, reliable and consistent performance. This means regular maintenance and testing to ensure they run without failures. This same mentality extends beyond the OT and into every corner of our organization. The goal is always to minimize risk and ensure reliability.”

THE POWER TO SCALE

Ken joined H2O Power shortly after it acquired another power generator, which operated in Connecticut and Massachusetts. He was charged with creating an in-house IT team that could replicate H2O’s IT systems for the acquired organization, enabling it to operate independently while being managed remotely by H2O through online information technology systems.

The project took eight months and was nearly done when business plans changed. The pivot meant the acquired company would need its own infrastructure systems to be managed by their internal IT team.

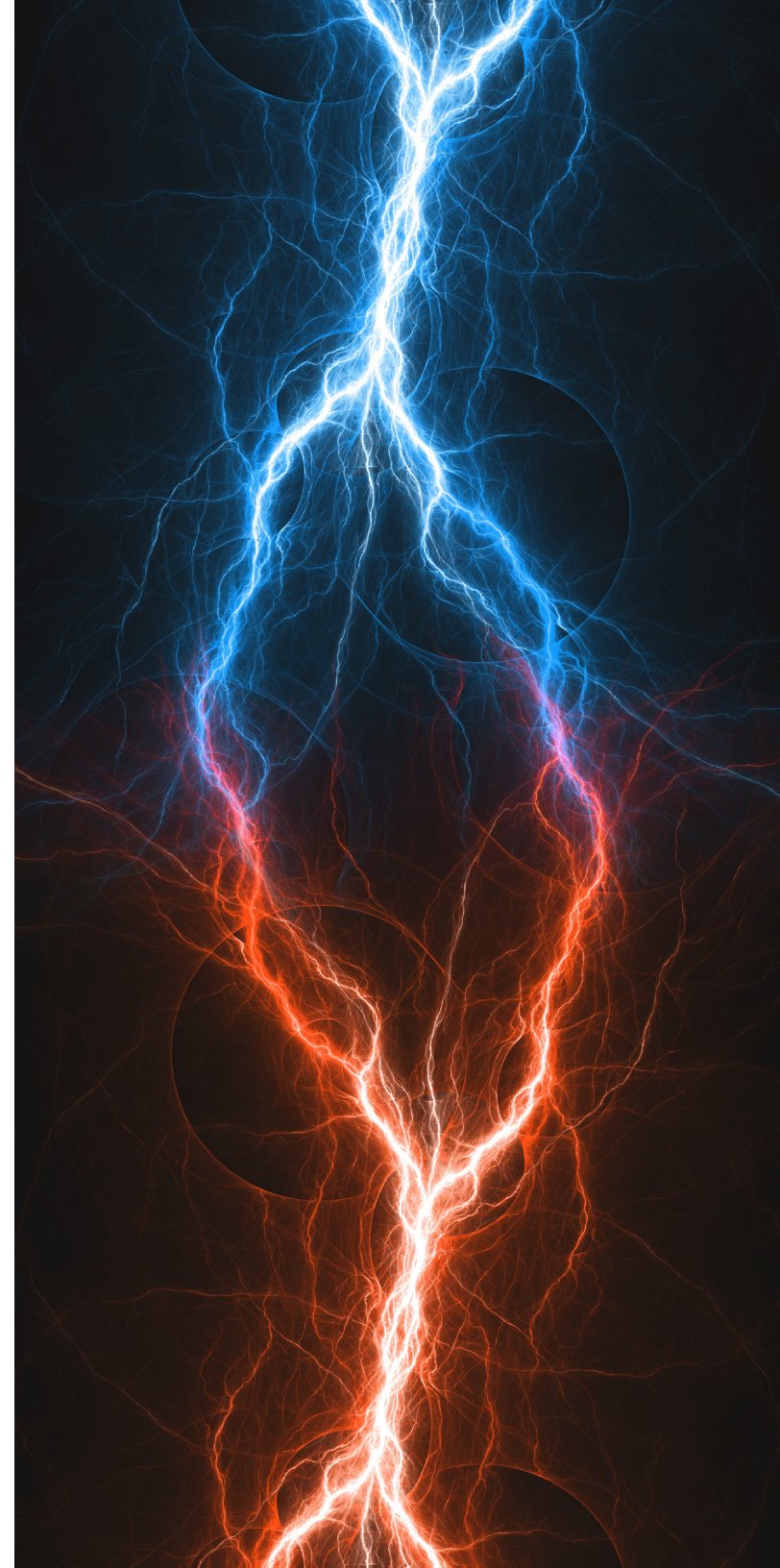
Ken realized this challenge would set a precedent for the future: H2O was a growing and evolving company. The company needed to ensure scalability, agility, responsiveness and flexibility. H2O required a partner who could understand the current state of the business, the challenges and opportunities available, and who would support Williamson in his quest to transform from a traditional broker of IT services to a strategic enabler of the business.

PARTNERS IN POWER

Ken's team opened discussions with several vendors by inviting proposals. In the beginning, Softchoice was simply one of many.

"When the meetings began, the conversations were 75% focused on modernizing legacy technology to address current challenges," said Mandip Kalsi, a Microsoft Azure Practice Lead at Softchoice. "But traditional technology only does so much for so long. Ken was very clear about the business objectives for H2O and it was then that we opened up the discussion on the cloud. By whiteboarding the potential of a cloud journey, we were able to demonstrate how multiple business challenges and objectives could be addressed with the cloud – all at a lower total cost of ownership."

Softchoice continued to validate the cloud journey by providing Williamson with the data he needed to inform the executive team at H2O. Softchoice also challenged standard assumptions, digging deep into potential areas of risk and opening up new areas of consideration that a cloud-first approach can enable. By ensuring that Williamson was equipped to discuss all of the business advantages of the cloud, Softchoice was soon chosen as the official partner for H2O's cloud journey.



"Migrating our email platform from on-premises to the cloud may seem like a small step, but in our change-averse culture, this was huge. We were asking people to potentially change the way they worked, and having to learn a new system to do so. Yes, it would allow for greater collaboration and a multitude of benefits, but with change comes risk, and our company, our people, and our entire industry cannot take risks. Softchoice was with my team and our employees every step of the way, minimizing that risk and ensuring that people felt empowered and confident with the new technology."

Ken Williamson,
IT Manager, H2O Power



ILLUMINATING THE PATH FORWARD

The first step to the cloud was to migrate the company's email system from its on-premises platform, without interruption, to the users manning the OT systems.

Williamson calls the email migration one of the fastest, simplest IT projects he has ever been a part of. With that validation came the confidence to move forward with Softchoice and work together as partners on a roadmap for the future.

"Softchoice and H2O are challenging all of the traditional ways of doing things in the power generation industry," said Nicolette Tassios, Senior Account Executive, Softchoice. "Ken is a champion of transformation and it is my pleasure to be able to empower him with the information he needs to sell his vision internally. H2O is becoming a place where people have the best tools to get their jobs done, and the company as a whole is very forward-thinking. We continue to help H2O ignite their innovation process."

In 2019, H2O's plan is to roll out more productivity elements of the O365 platform and begin implementing them in such a way that there is full adoption among all users. As well, Softchoice is helping H2O build out a new cloud-based data centre and along with a frequently tested recovery strategy.

With each incremental and impactful step, H2O is empowering their people and their business with the power of the cloud.