Building a Strong Foundation for Humber College's Digital Campus

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Canada's Largest College Faced Post-Migration Issues

As part of its Digital Campus Plan, Humber College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning (Humber) focuses on harnessing technology to deliver digital capabilities to innovate and develop equitable access to remarkable experiences for students and employees. Humber's Information Technology Services (ITS) team embarked on a cloud migration project in 2020 to move Ellucian Banner to the Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud to further this goal.

While Ruth Butlin, Director of Enterprise Applications in ITS at Humber, described the overall Banner student information systems and finance application migration as "seamless" her team soon experienced challenges when students began registering for Winter 2021 courses.

Will Queiros, Applications Architect at Humber College, explained this as "a compounding effect of moving a legacy system to the cloud and a high-demand performance event."

Like many colleges, Humber assigns groups of students a specific window of time to log on and register for their courses. With more than 28,000 students registering for the 2021 Winter term, each registration window opening let in a flood of students and Humber's system, now running on AWS, needed to be configured to handle the peak volume at registration.

Queiros explained that with previous on-premises infrastructure, "the idea was the bigger, the better," meaning the team purposely over-provisioned their on-premise infrastructure to support the occasional periods of peak performance. But one of the goals of cloud migrations and modernizations is to right-size your infrastructure.

Queiros pointed out the issue, "So you right-size things for the day-to-day needs, but how do you right-size it for the peaks with a legacy system in the cloud?"

HUMBER

Industry: Higher education

Location: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Enrollment: 86,000 learners in person and online

> "As you migrate legacy applications to the cloud, it's not like moving Lego blocks that fit perfectly together. You need trusted partners like House of Brick to help."
>
> – **Ruth Butlin**, Director of Enterprise Applications and ITS, Humber College

A Holistic Approach Boosts Performance

With business-critical performance issues, Butlin's team looked to their infrastructure for the solution, which she described as three components of a triangle: the Banner application, the supporting Oracle database, and the AWS Cloud.

While team members and vendor engineers offer expertise in individual components, she was missing deep knowledge across the entire eco-system of their application, database, and AWS Cloud layers. Butlin recognized the need to work with an experienced agency. She noted that House of Brick, with more than 20 years of experience helping organizations optimize processes across their stack was the right fit for Humber.

Butlin recalled that "House of Brick was able to parachute in and hit the ground running" and quickly oriented themselves to Humber's architecture.

"We threw a lot of technical terms specific to Banner, Oracle, and AWS Cloud at the House of Brick team, and they just got it," Queiros recalled.

Queiros also noted House of Brick's efficiency – their holistic view of the system meant they knew where to focus their efforts and how to avoid distractions. This outcome-focused approach helped Humber address changes to compute resources, database configurations, and application and user flows.

Butlin reported, "Now registration is a non-event from a performance standpoint. Everything just works."

Humber ITS Finds a Trusted Partner

After addressing the registration peak volume challenge, Humber continued working with House of Brick.

"When making Banner and Oracle on AWS architecture decisions, we can have a quick call with House of Brick for a second opinion," Queiros said.

House of Brick has acted as an extension of the Humber team on Banner application updates, an Oracle Database 19c upgrade, further performance testing, and tuning at the application-server level.

"As you migrate legacy applications to the cloud, it's not like moving Lego blocks that fit perfectly together. You need trusted partners like House of Brick to help," Butlin explained.

Key Benefits

- Improved application availability
- Achieved business continuity
- Reduced infrastructure resources and costs

About House of Brick

House of Brick couples world-class software innovation with industry-leading consulting expertise to solve customers' most complex cloud migration and operational challenges.

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