

# Barbri Chooses a Cloud-Only Strategy for their IT Systems

*Learn how The Barbri Group converted their databases from Oracle to SQL Server and put together a cloud-only strategy.*

## Introduction

For over 50 years - most of that time as the only national bar review provider - Barbri has become synonymous with bar prep success. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, The Barbri Group specializes in legal educational advancement and professional skills development. With both domestic and international offices, Barbri resources and expertise span all 50 states, Europe, South Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Like most organizations, Barbri's computing environment consisted of traditional, on-premises systems running a variety of applications. Barbri utilized Oracle as their database and leveraged the services of a hosting provider to house their computing environments. After researching cloud DBMS and alternative database platforms on the market, Barbri determined that converting their databases from Oracle to SQL Server and putting together an eventual cloud-only strategy would allow them to improve their business processes and provide better educational services to their clients.

## Barbri's Cloud-Only Strategy

A recent survey from Evolve IP, one of the nation's fastest growing cloud strategy

companies, found that over 90% of the 1,500 C-level executives surveyed stated that the cloud will become the standard architecture of choice for their computing systems.

Organizations choosing to migrate their systems to the cloud have many different architecture strategies and vendors to choose from. Strategies can include cloud only, cloud first and best fit. They can choose to migrate their on-premises databases to Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS), which provides virtualized computing resources over the internet, or to Database-as-a-Service (DBaaS) platforms that offer a complete database ecosystem including the hardware, operating system and database software.

In Barbri's case, they chose to not only migrate their entire computing environment to the cloud but to also convert their Oracle databases to its top competitor, Microsoft SQL Server, during the cloud migration process.

Mark Kaplan, Barbri's Director of IT, explained how this strategy was developed. "We had made the decision to migrate from Oracle to SQL Server for some time. After evaluating the pros and cons of cloud architectures, we felt that it was in Barbri's best interest to choose a cloud-only strategy for our organization. Our business is seasonal by nature, and the cloud allows us to easily scale computing

horsepower up or down to meet our processing needs. Its ease of use allows us to quickly create new systems and more easily leverage HA and DR architectures.”

Mark continued, “Since our strategy is to migrate all of our systems to the cloud, we included the database product conversion as part of our cloud migration process. We chose to run our SQL Server databases initially on Azure IaaS, but our goal was to eventually convert them to Microsoft’s Azure SQL DB DBaaS environment.”

## Converting Oracle On-Premises to SQL Server in the Cloud

Because IaaS systems allow you to install traditional operating systems, application and database software on cloud servers, the main challenge for Barbri was the Oracle to SQL Server database software conversion. Barbri’s developers began the process of making the required application changes to access the new database software. In addition, a third-party vendor was contracted to convert the database data from Oracle to SQL Server.

## Aligning RDX Skill Sets to Customer Business Needs

Barbri wanted to ensure that its new SQL Server platforms were effectively monitored and supported after the conversion process was complete and chose RDX to provide remote database services for the new environments. “RDX was brought in during the conversion process. We initially began the relationship by resolving some of the general conversion issues that were occurring and also spent time tuning their new SQL Server Azure IaaS database platforms,” stated Jim Donahoe, Cloud Solution Architect at RDX.

RDX’s Director of Service Delivery, Kon Melamud, explained how RDX aligns skill sets with customer needs. “During the sales and customer integration process, we focus heavily on understanding what products, technologies and strategies each customer is using. In addition, we need to learn as much as we

can about their future goals and strategies.

Understanding each customer’s current support needs and future strategies allows us to assign RDX personnel that have the required skill sets to ensure a successful relationship. In this case, Jim Donahoe, who has extensive experience in both Microsoft IaaS and Azure SQL DB DBaaS architectures, was the most appropriate choice. Jim has performed dozens of on-premises to cloud and IaaS to DBaaS conversions. Additionally, Jim has an entire team of cloud experts to assist him when needed.”

Mark Kaplan agrees stating, “Jim is our DBA. He does everything we need and does it very well. When it comes to database support, Jim does it all.”

## Migrating From SQL Server IaaS to Azure SQL DB DBaaS

RDX is currently migrating Barbri’s SQL Server IaaS databases to Azure SQL DB DBaaS systems and is working closely with their development and systems teams to create and execute thorough conversion test plans.

Jim stated, “You treat on-premises to cloud and cloud-to-cloud migrations like any other critical IT project. You test everything. A thorough test plan should be developed and each step performed and documented. More testing now means less surprises later. Barbri is awesome at quickly adapting to how the cloud works. Their developers are very strong at leveraging the benefits that the cloud provides. They also understand the changes that need to be made and are able to quickly implement them.”

RDX is working with Barbri to convert some of the SQL Server IaaS features to their Azure SQL DB DBaaS counterparts. In addition, Jim is evaluating Azure SQL DB performance levels and tiers to ensure Barbri benefits from an environment that is cost-effective and meets their performance needs. Jim intends to monitor production workloads once the migration is complete to possibly implement Azure SQL DB’s elastic pool feature which allows multiple databases to share assigned computing resources.

## A Growing Service Provider/Customer Relationship

In addition to increasing the amount of database administration services RDX provides, the overall RDX relationship with Barbri continues to grow. RDX's Business Intelligence Team is currently working with Barbri personnel to create a cloud data warehouse. Barbri is also working with RDX to provide support for additional IaaS computing environments.

Barbri's successful implementation of its cloud-only strategy highlights what can be achieved with proper planning and assigning personnel with the appropriate skill sets to meet current and future technical support needs.

## About the Barbri Group

Barbri Group companies are mutually committed to improving education by working with many other smart partners, educators and institutions in finding better ways to help law schools, law firms and law-related businesses prosper. By consulting and collaborating on inventive education ideas and approaches, amazing progress continues to be made.

## About RDX

RDX is the pioneer of remote data infrastructure services having offered these services since 1994. For over two decades, RDX has helped hundreds of companies lower support costs while increasing database performance and availability. RDX provides customers with peace of mind knowing their environments are administered by expert professionals utilizing industry-leading SSAE 16 Type II best practices. RDX's staff is backed by a monitoring and support infrastructure that has been continuously improved and enhanced over its 20-year history. RDX recently achieved its seventh SSAE 16 TYPE II Certification and its fifth PCI-DSS Compliance in Q1 of 2017.