



From Crisis to Opportunity: **Moving Oracle E-Business Suite to AWS (with a Little Help)**

By Ross Nelson - IT Manager @ Belron

Belron

At Belron, we solve people's problems with real care. It doesn't matter if they're customers or employees, we always do right by them, no matter what it takes.

Our business is glass—mostly in the automotive sector. We cover home accident damage, as well as body and vapor damage in car windows. When you need your windshield replaced because it's chipped or cracked, you come to us. We also manufacture the tools used to make these repairs.

You might not have heard of Belron, but we operate over a dozen vehicle glass and replacement companies in 35 countries. Our

brands include Carglass, Safelite Autoglass, Lebeau, and Glass Medic—the world's leading provider of vehicle glass repair systems.

The Future Is Now

Belron's IT department is all about future scoping. Externally, we are looking at technologies like the Internet of Things. Connected cars are going to be a massive disruptor in the automotive industry, and we're going to have to figure out their impact on our business. How will we interact with smart systems that dial in a repair when a windshield cracks or a passenger door window shatters? Will this change the way we deliver our services?

Internally, we are focused on the present. We need to ensure our current IT needs are being met and optimized. As a result, a good chunk of everything we do resides on the cloud. There are several reasons for this. For starters, it's easier to scale cloud-based infrastructure. If we need more computing power or storage, we can spin up virtual machines or increase capacity at the touch of a button. It is also faster to apply patches, install updates, and create integrations on the cloud.

But we were lagging in one area. The finance module at Belron International headquarters ran on an instance of Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS) that was hosted on physical servers at an off-site data center. It was an internal system that consolidated high-level financial data from our various business units. While it wasn't customer facing, it was vitally important to our finance team.

Transforming a Crisis Into an Opportunity

Other divisions use the same Oracle EBS on the cloud, but the version that ran at our headquarters was hosted and maintained on physical infrastructure by a managed service provider (MSP). We often use MSPs so our IT teams can focus on other, mission-critical tasks. We wanted the management of the application off our plate, but this Oracle EBS instance was not an optimal

situation. Integrations and updates took forever, and we were spending far too much money on our monthly managed services contract.

We were starting to explore our options when we got a troubling phone call. Our MSP was losing access to the colocation that hosted our EBS servers, and we had three weeks to migrate our systems to new infrastructure. It was an impossible deadline to meet. There was no way we could make the switch in such a short time and—to make matters worse—the colocation host had asked them to physically pull their servers at that date and move them to another facility.

It took some negotiation, but we managed to get a bit of a reprieve. Our MSP's CIO cut a deal with his hosting provider, and we were given an additional five weeks to migrate our servers, but two months was still cutting it close. We told our MSP to go ahead with the physical move, but we'd already set our sights on the cloud, specifically Amazon Web Services (AWS).

We already hosted some of our other systems on AWS. Our Customer & Digital Director, Nick Cleary, had traveled to the AWS re:Invent trade show in Las Vegas the previous year, where he'd met the team from clckwrk (which is now part of RDX), and had started talks about outsourcing some of the management of our AWS infrastructure.

Nick saw the data center move as an opportunity to test the waters and was pleased to discover that moving Oracle to AWS was clckwrk's bread and butter. We hit on a plan: clckwrk would migrate our servers to AWS at the same time our MSP was moving them to a new physical data center. It was a race against the clock, and we would switch to the instance that was ready first.

Migrating to the Cloud

To start, clckwrk set up a VPN tunnel into the data center, extracted our Oracle EBS setup, and moved it to AWS. At the very least, we knew we had a virtual backup in case something went wrong with our physical migration. There was no telling what might have happened when we powered down servers that had been working non-stop for years and moved them to a new location. Our fail-safe was clckwrk.

Once they'd duplicated our Oracle EBS instance on AWS, clckwrk's team started to test all our integrations and patches. They made sure that this new iteration was the functional equivalent of our previous installation.

There were a few challenges. We'd asked our former MSP to customize some elements of our Oracle EBS installation, but they hadn't documented them properly, so clckwrk went through our code base and figured out how everything worked.

They also discovered we were still using a 32-bit version of the Oracle EBS and this was causing issues with service packs and patches. Fortunately, clckwrk was able to iron out all these problems as the deadline approached. Our finance team had already agreed to switch over to whichever setup was ready first, and clckwrk won that race. It was clear that our future lay entirely in the cloud.

From Crisis to Partnership

Because of how successful the migration was, we decided to sign a monthly service-delivery agreement with clckwrk for Oracle EBS. The company is now providing 360-degree platform support via their UK office, and functional support via a team in New Zealand. The fact that they spell out this division of labor is an indication of the level of transparency we've come to expect from them.

From the very beginning, clckwrk shared ownership of the Oracle migration. They walked us through the process and brought in key people to assist us with the move. Although we had internal staff with the requisite expertise, we couldn't jeopardize our day-to-day operations by pulling them away from their duties to work on this project. This project was an emergency, but it didn't feel that way because clckwrk was so professional. They never treated the migration like a Belron deadline. We were in this together.

Once the migration was made, though, there was more work ahead. We had a long list of updates to install, and we needed to upgrade Oracle EBS to v12.2.8. Thankfully, clckwrk helped us make these changes without a hitch. We now have monthly conversations with our team about what's working, what isn't, and what lies ahead. We ask our finance team what features and functionalities they'd like to see, and we are building a roadmap for their future implementation.

In terms of performance, everything runs faster on AWS. We have integrated more business units, and so our finance team has a better view of what's happening around the world, and we recently launched a company-wide expense-reporting tool.

Productivity is up, and everyone is free to focus on their work instead of worrying about software patches and compatibility issues.

Our move to the cloud for Oracle EBS has had

a big impact on the finance departments. After we'd moved everything to AWS and spun down the physical servers, there were zero tickets. Our finance team had no issues to report—they were a happy bunch.

There's also tremendous peace of mind in knowing that clckwrk is an expert in Oracle EBS and AWS. If we ever encounter a significant issue, we know their team will step in and deal with it. We can sleep easy and take our weekends off knowing clckwrk will handle these escalations instead of having to engage with various vendors and systems ourselves. That's the value of having a team like clckwrk on an initiative like this.

In the midst of a crisis, clckwrk stepped up and proved to be a valuable and trustworthy partner. Their continued support is helping our finance and IT teams to focus on our priorities and to embody Belron's values by solving our people's problems with real care.



Ready to Migrate Oracle to AWS?
Contact us at info@clckwrk.com

