



CUSTOMER STORY

Skyscanner Books Panzura

for Its Journey to Secure
& Reliable Unstructured
Data Management

A trailblazer in the travel industry, Skyscanner has been at the fore in applying technology for seamless search and booking experiences. The company’s commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction led to it adopting the Panzura CloudFS global file system for a digital transformation that will propel it into its next business era.

Customer Journey Highlights



120-180

CloudFS end-users
in 5 departments



8 Weeks

Time to PoC go-live



10 Weeks

Time to cloud
migration

Challenges

File Sharing

Technology moves quickly, and Skyscanner had started seeing signs that it had outgrown its legacy infrastructure. Files were being dropped from shared locations or could not be accessed, and permissions weren't being consistently invoked. Teamwork was being negatively impacted.

Cloud Migration

“We needed to find a solution,” said Engineering Manager Ronnie Walker. “We needed to get our file-sharing services out of offices and into the cloud and we were looking for a cloud agnostic solution.”

The solution had to work across operating systems, Windows through Mac, and supply the same or better quality of service to 5 groups of globally dispersed stakeholders. “We didn't want to reduce the offering available to stakeholders; we wanted to expand it and give them new opportunities to collaborate,” said Walker.

In early 2023, Skyscanner began its journey to cloud-based global file management that would allow staff all over the world to work securely on the same content at the same time. Walker's team was handed the responsibility to deliver fast, reliable, and unfettered 24/7 file access. The integrity of the company's unstructured data and cross-team collaboration, decision-making, and continued productivity depended on it.

Solution

Walker and his team began researching available solutions. “We looked extensively at the offerings, taking the best part of probably 18 months to effectively investigate, analyze against our current systems, and narrow it down to a couple of proof of concepts.”

The Skyscanner team looked at AWS file sharing, and then, being a Microsoft service user, staff also evaluated SharePoint. In addition to Panzura, all other companies offering file sharing in the cloud were evaluated.

“Panzura was the most successful proof of concept, and we deployed it into production,” said Walker.

Benefits

Joint Problem-Solving

Working with Panzura was an excellent experience, says Walker. “The sales team was very attentive to our needs, and my team spoke very highly of Panzura support. They understood what we were doing, and why we were trying to do it in certain ways.”

Walker describes his team as being very process oriented. The team’s goal was to fully understand the Panzura technology they would be using and become fully able to deploy and manage it. At every turn, Panzura was there to help.

“Our test with Panzura was very, very successful,” said Walker. “We had access to the technical specialists behind the scenes to answer any questions. They took on finding solutions to the challenges we came across. Any issues that were reported by our stakeholders were immediately investigated, which was great. It was a two-team effort.”

Thorough and Wide-Ranging Support

Panzura and Skyscanner teams started working on the proof of concept (PoC) in late January and went live into production within 8 weeks. The PoC would run for 3 months to allow time to engage all stakeholders, run tests, and respond to end-user feedback.

Walker says that working through the PoC was challenging. “We had some technical issues that had to be worked through. Bringing our services into the cloud was long overdue. We knew we had to do it, and we wanted to do it correctly. That’s why we took the time to evaluate and look at the different vendors. The support we got from Panzura was wide ranging.”

Skyscanner has engineering standards that all its deployments must adhere to. With Panzura’s guidance and technical assistance, the PoC “ripped everything down,” and new infrastructure was developed for deploying to a cloud provider.

“We also engaged our security teams all through the process to make sure they were happy with what we were deploying, how we were deploying it, and how secure it was,” said Walker. “Panzura met all our standards, from proof of concept through to production.”

High Availability and Performance

Unlike some other solutions, the Panzura CloudFS file system includes the option to configure a high availability (HA) node with automatic failover in case of an infrastructure fault. Being a global company, Skyscanner used the HA configuration to ensure uninterrupted file access and effective collaboration for internal stakeholders from Barcelona to Singapore.

“If a node in APAC or EMEA becomes unavailable, we automatically re-route. The only downside for the end user is a slight increase in response time,” explained Walker.

Skyscanner monitors Panzura performance for users across the company and can see how the node filers are performing. “From an end user perspective, very rarely is there anybody that turns up and says, ‘By the way, this is really working well.’ We tend to only hear complaints, but there have not been many at all,” says Walker. “There were challenges, but through it all, we delivered a top solution for our stakeholders.”

Seamless User Experience

Walker says the end-user changeover to Panzura was not noticeable. “We left on a Friday evening and came back Monday, and it just transitioned seamlessly over the weekend to the new system.”

A planned call with stakeholders after the switchover verified the lack of problems.

“It was a very, very smooth transition to using Panzura, and that was a big one for us, because we didn’t want to upset the stakeholders and introduce lag time.”

New Collaborations, Solid File-Sharing, Business Continuity

Panzura data management is also making a difference in terms of collaboration. “Panzura has allowed us to develop new collaborations between teams, between offices. It’s helping make teams faster and smarter together,” said Walker.

He also reports that file-sharing problems have disappeared. “We have information being shared easily and readily from a month-end financial process through to payroll being available in APAC to EMEA.”

After migrating the last of the stakeholder groups, Skyscanner experienced an ISP outage at one of the offices. But, because the company was now cloud-based and using Panzura HA, they were not impacted.

“Teams could still work seamlessly, even though that office was offline. Before the migration, the fault would have dramatically impacted that team, and we would have had to manually reroute traffic and get them all connecting to another office,” said Walker.

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Ronnie Walker, Skyscanner Engineering Manager



Future

When asked what advice he would give others considering a global file system, Walker said that information gathering will help you make the right decision. “There are a lot of offerings out there, and obviously they don’t all have the same capabilities. Have a clear thought about what you want to get out of any deployment and ask questions.”

For Skyscanner, the journey ahead is clear and bright. “We’ve been live on CloudFS for about 8 months now. We have had interest from other parts of the business in transitioning over to Panzura. We’ve also had some conversations about Panzura Edge. We’ll take each one case-by-case based on requirements, and we will continue to look at Panzura offerings.

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