

Making the leap from APIC 5.0.x to APIC 2018.x

Overview:

- Orchestrated upgrade to APIC v2018 for a large financial organization
 - Deployed APIC in the cloud
 - Utilized Docker and Kubernetes for flexible control of their cloud environment
 - Leveraged the latest features of APIC v2018 to create and deploy new secure APIs
 - Maintained agility in a challenging, continuous integration delivery model
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iSOA Group, Inc. is a leader in helping clients leverage innovative API management solutions. We help companies enable innovation, both by their own development teams and by those at their partners and clients, by incorporating key applications and services APIs into their own agile applications.

After the successful implementation of IBM API Connect (APIC) v5 at a leading financial organization, a new project emerged: The organization wanted to extend their API assets to a multitude of financial entities throughout the U.S., and simultaneously upgrade to APIC v2018 in Azure. The key issues and strategic goals of that rollout generated some crucial questions:

- Could new capabilities reside in the Azure Cloud?
- Would the solution enable a Docker and Kubernetes strategy?
- Would APIC v2018 deployment in Azure be viable?
- Could they leverage their experience with the prior version of APIC in the cloud?
- How quickly could they utilize the advanced features of APIC v2018 to create new secure APIs to support the new market?

These goals line up perfectly with iSOA Group's technical sweet spot. Thanks to our deep relationships with IBM, iSOA Group was able to provide the perfect combination of technical skill and liaison capabilities between the customer and the IBM lab, despite the newness of the version. It's a combination that produces better results in shorter timeframes.



The challenges impacted environment provisioning, sprint deliverables and confidence.

iSOA Group provided expertise and manpower to help address the issues.

Problem:

Learning a new product—even if you’ve had experience with a prior version—can be daunting. Especially if the new product requires a paradigm shift. And that was the exact problem that faced the customer. Even though they could consult with personnel familiar with the prior version, the platform for the new project was not similar to the former. For instance, the new project is in the Azure Cloud, while the prior implementation was on-premises and VMware-based. The latest version utilizes Docker containers managed by Kubernetes. These are new technologies that required new skills. In the comfort of an existing environment, everything was well defined and previously validated. Considerations like security zones, network topologies and governance were all known factors. But in the new environment, these became implementation questions. Below are some of the other challenges for the new project:

- New product was on a continuous delivery (CD) model so product updates and bug fixes were distributed each week.
- Product documentation couldn’t keep up with CD model.
- Product had many new features and had changes to prior version’s features.
- Personnel experienced with prior version were not readily available and not skilled on latest version.
- Authentication of existing users was hampered by the hybrid model.
- Azure network and security were still to be defined and implemented.
- Azure Kubernetes (AKS) was slightly different from IBM-suggested Kubernetes implementation, which exposed installation anomalies.
- Project was utilizing Agile processing, and sprints were severely impacted.
- Development of APIs was hampered.

Myriad other issues also required attention and resolution. All of these challenges impacted environment provisioning, sprint deliverables and confidence. To help solve these challenges, iSOA Group was engaged to provide expertise and manpower to address API connection issues and to develop the APIs.

iSOA Group solution recap:

The implementation was broken down into key steps and deliverables. iSOA Group:

- 1.** Conducted an APIC workshop to gather and validate requirements.
- 2.** Helped the customer understand the new technology and how they could maximize their results.
- 3.** Determined which method(s) of security would be adopted and built the interfaces.
- 4.** Worked with the client and created APIs to assist with the transformation of back-end services.
- 5.** Illustrated how IBM’s APIC solution can be a critical enabler of the customer’s initiative.
- 6.** Configured APIC in multiple environments to assure high availability and security.
- 7.** Provided best practices so the customer can manage the systems themselves.
- 8.** Assisted with the API management workflows and corporate branding of their portal.
- 9.** Assisted with the testing and validation of components and API management governance.
- 10.** Assisted with DevOps Continuous Integration/Continuous Deployment (CI/CD) to ensure agility.
- 11.** Provided guidance on how to customize analytics.

Results:

Learning a new product alongside new containerization technologies places additional pressure on the delivery team because there are no existing patterns to follow. Along the journey, there were issues that were quickly addressed thanks to iSOA Group's deep network of IBM lab contacts. What iSOA Group could provide to the customer solidified the stakeholders' faith in the strategy, as well as in the products and environments being utilized.

The project was completed, and knowledge transfer as well as on-demand consulting was initiated.



With iSOA Group's expertise and process methodology, complex projects like this one become a proven approach that can be replicated across a variety of customer engagements.

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