

THE CLOUD INDUSTRY FORUM AND OUTSOURCERY – A CASE STUDY



THE CLOUD INDUSTRY FORUM

The **Cloud Industry Forum (CIF) Code of Practice**, managed by CIF's independent certification partner APM Group, is a credible, certifiable tool that allows Cloud Service Providers (CSPs) to demonstrate that they meet specified requirements of transparency, accountability and capability. It aims to drive transparency and disclosure from suppliers offering cloud services in order to provide clarity and assurance to end-users seeking to migrate to the cloud.

The use of the CIF certification mark on a vendor's website serves two clear purposes: it makes a public declaration of professional and commercial intent on the part of the CSP and it provides a visual mark of recognition that engenders confidence in the end-user that the organisation is open and professional in its commercial activities.

OUTSOURCERY: FOUNDER MEMBER

Founded in 2007, Outsourcery is a world-leading CSP based in the UK. The company aims to remove the need for businesses of all sizes to own and manage IT, Unified Communications, video applications and infrastructure. End-customers range from start-ups to FTSE-100 companies. Outsourcery is a founding member of CIF.

WHY CHOOSE THE CIF CODE OF PRACTICE?

Having been members of CIF since its inception, Outsourcery remains committed to the need for an industry Code of Practice and is therefore highly attuned to its benefits. Certifying to the Code aligned with Outsourcery's ethos of continual improvement, offering an opportunity to secure independent validation of its services.

“From a business point of view, achieving certification is a case of us practicing what we preach. You can't go out in the marketplace and encourage best practice, if you're not adhering to industry standards yourself,” explains Piers Linney, Co-CEO of Outsourcery.

Rachel Chesters, Head of Marketing at Outsourcery, adds: “A crucial element of the CIF Code of Practice is trust. With no internationally recognised cloud standards currently available in the market, end-users have few benchmarks against which they can measure CSPs. The Code provides such a benchmark, ensuring that users of cloud services have access to all of the information they need to be able to make informed choices about their provider. Certifying against the Code means that we've been scrutinised by a trusted and independent third party and have been found to be a trustworthy cloud provider. Essentially it's a one-stop-shop for customers and partners.”

WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT?

Brenda Adams, Head of Business Operations at Outsourcery, explains: “We are already compliant with a number of industry standards, including ISO 27001, ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, but while these standards have implications for cloud services provision, they don’t directly map to cloud computing. The CIF Code of Practice has been developed specifically for cloud and centres on operational transparency.”

Adams continues: “Another key difference is that it is geared towards end-users. At every stage in the certification process, APM Group scrutinised the information provided purely from the point of view of a customer, rather than that of an auditor. This kind of external assessment means that we have been able to improve the way that we present key information about our services, become more user-friendly and as a result, make it easier and more attractive to do business with us.”

CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The entire process is overseen by APM Group, which provides supporting documentation, guidance where required, and assess applications for 'self-certification'. **Outsourcery achieved the original certification in just over a month**, although other organisations have taken longer.

Adams explains: “Overall the process took about a month. The speed at which we achieved the certification in part owes to our historical relationship with CIF, which meant that we had already embedded many of their best practice recommendations in our business and its culture. However, the biggest advantage was that we were already compliant with a number of ISO standards, which meant that much of the documentation required for the Code of Practice had previously been produced. For the ISO uninitiated, the process could take longer.

“It is a testament to the high standards of the Code that the process is rigorous. We had a total of four employees directly involved in the certification process, although a number of other employees were brought in to advise on the various requirements of the Code. The main takeaway here is that any CSP that undertakes certification under the belief that it’s a simple box-ticking exercise, will be disappointed – but the rewards that come from becoming certified certainly justify the input” Adams concludes.

PARTNER NETWORKS

Under the CIF Code, CSPs are permitted to use existing certifications towards CIF self-certified status, including the CIF certified status of partners. APM Group has been working with CIF to encourage larger vendors who provide the vital infrastructure to smaller CSPs to go through the CIF certification process, which will not only provide an added level of credibility at the very start of the cloud supply chain but will mean larger providers can enable their certified status to be used by network partners, who use the infrastructure to deploy services to customers.

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PARTNER NETWORKS CONTINUED...

Outsourcery plans to leverage its certification to encourage its network of over 500 channel partners to certify, which is key to creating a more trustworthy and transparent cloud industry.

“CSPs do not need to provide all aspects of service delivery and can effectively ‘share’ certifications with partners,” Chesters explains. “Having now achieved the certification for ourselves, we are actively encouraging CSPs in our partner network to follow suit. Ensuring transparency at every touch point on the cloud supply chain is key to creating a fully sustainable and trustworthy cloud ecosystem.”

THE BENEFITS

Although Outsourcery has experienced a range of benefits since certifying, the main winner has been its customers.

“Certifying against the Code of Practice has ultimately made our business more transparent and further cemented our commitment to best practice”, says Chesters. “Having gone through the process, we realised that some of our documentation was not as clear as it could have been. For example, we implemented some changes to our high-level security documentation, to improve transparency.”

She goes on to say, “the public disclosure element of the Code requires us to place all pertinent information about our services and organisational set-up on an externally hosted site. With this key information in one place, any customer or prospect can quickly find everything that they need to be able to make an informed choice about their CSP.

“In addition, a key part of our business strategy is building a federation of trusted, responsible and accountable cloud partners, which will, in turn, help to raise standards in the cloud industry. The Code of Practice will help us on the way to achieving this vision. It’s encouraging to see that a number of our partners have expressed interest in pursuing the certification,” concludes Chesters.

A SUMMARY FROM ALEX HILTON, CEO, CLOUD INDUSTRY FORUM

In conclusion Alex Hilton, CEO of the Cloud Industry Forum, has the following words, regarding Outsourcery’s certification to the Code: “As technology continues to move and evolve at such pace, it’s important that suppliers providing cloud services can publicly demonstrate adherence to best practice and build trust and confidence in the industry. Organisations seeking to use cloud services need a straightforward way to qualify potential suppliers that will accurately define the services offered and standards of operations and security. CIF welcomes Outsourcery’s demonstrable commitment to this principle through early and continuous certification to the CIF Code of Practice.”