

Simon Electric: Optimising the Administration of On-Prem and Cloud Systems



We speak with Ruben Fernandez, Corporate Infrastructure Manager at Simon Electric, and Toni Naspler, Service Manager at IThinkUPC.

In a constantly evolving environment, Simon has successfully combined the launch of strategic services with the day-to-day optimisation of IT systems, thanks to a model of continuous, incremental improvement and collaborative work.

Ruben, what was your situation before working with IThinkUPC?

Ruben: At Simon, we found ourselves needing, on one hand, to focus a large part of the IT department's efforts on responding to the company's strategic needs. On the other hand, from an infrastructure management standpoint, it was clear that we had to optimise and make the management of our systems more efficient, and for that, we needed external support.

Our IT ecosystem is hybrid, with infrastructure and services both on-prem (spread across three in-house data centres) and in the cloud, via AWS. These services support all company processes, including factory production.

For each of these environments, we had the support of two different providers. We clearly saw room for improvement in the service we were receiving, especially if we could unify it under a single provider. That's when we began searching for a new provider and technology partner.

What exactly were you looking for in this new partner?

Ruben: First, proven experience in both on-prem environments and AWS. But beyond that, we wanted **a partner with a clear goal of helping and guiding us in optimising our systems administration model**, knowing that we wouldn't be transferring all operations to them, and that our own involvement would be limited.

Toni, how did you approach this challenge from IThinkUPC's side?

Toni: We always propose a **service model tailored to the specific needs of each client**. In this case, we identified from the start that the approach had to be based on three lines of action:

- 1. A light initial setup project** that would allow us to progressively but quickly gain knowledge, enabling us to collaborate in the operations and optimisation of Simon's various systems and environments. A key part of this phase was the implementation of a 24x7 integrated monitoring service, as Simon didn't have one and didn't want to invest in their own platform and services.
- 2. A support service for administration**, primarily aimed at relieving Simon's systems team from the most common administrative and request-resolution tasks.
- 3. A technical office** as a key element, with the goal of progressively optimising the above tasks, especially through automation, and always within a predefined service scope.

Ruben, what made you choose IThinkUPC?

Ruben: I'd say we connected right away, and their proposal fit us perfectly.

We had little time and a limited budget and needed to get started immediately. The fact

that they presented us with a transformation and progressive optimisation model, with an agile approach and no heavy prior consulting, was very appealing.

We also identified the technical office as one of the main added values, since we didn't have one before, along with the integrated monitoring.

“The integrated 24x7 monitoring and the technical office have been two key tools in achieving very significant gains”

Toni: We were also aware that these aspects were key. We knew that, in the initial phase, Simon might need more hours of administrative support to lighten the load on the internal team and make progress — but that these hours would gradually decrease as we implemented improvements. And that made perfect sense to us, as it is precisely in this phase of proactive optimisation where we wanted to provide the most value and deliver tangible results in the short and medium term from the technical office.

How has the collaboration process been to implement this progressive transformation?

Ruben: Collaboration has been essential to agree on and prioritise the various improvement proposals that emerged from both sides. Some we had already identified, others were brought to the table by IThinkUPC. We planned them out so they could develop and implement them progressively, within the scope of the monthly contract.

What key changes would you highlight?

Ruben: Regarding monitoring, for example, having a fully operational integrated 24x7 ser-

vice that acts as first responder has allowed us to gain a more global view of the status of our services and infrastructure, and to reduce response times. This was possible, in part, thanks to the integration that IThinkUPC carried out between their monitoring tool and our Jira Service Desk.

Toni: Exactly. We are partners and work with the Centreon solution, which we value for its wide variety of plugins designed for both on-prem and cloud systems. Additionally, it offers great capabilities for integrating with ITSM tools like Jira and automating responses to events, seamlessly connecting with other DevOps tools.

From there, **the improvements in operational efficiency and security** have been numerous. For instance, patch management — previously very manual — has seen a dramatic transformation. This has been made possible through the application of GPO policies for Windows on-prem environments and Patch Manager for Windows and Linux servers on AWS. This entire process has been automated, taking into account both preproduction and production environments, following a defined validation calendar and workflow.

As for AWS, we can highlight several examples:

- We've defined the entire infrastructure — EC2 servers, network, and Patch Manager — as code (IaC) using Terraform, which has clearly improved scalability, speed, security, reliability, and efficiency.
- We've reviewed and optimised the costs of several AWS services, including EC2, storage, backups, and ALBs. We've also simplified the start/stop management of EC2 and RDS instances through a single Lambda function combined with EventBridge Schedules, thus eliminating unnecessary expenses.

- In terms of security, we've implemented AWS Systems Manager (SSM), restricted access via SSH, and enhanced the use of tools like GuardDuty.

One of the remaining challenges is implementing automatic renewal of SSL certificates using Lambda functions.

Ruben, what tangible benefits have you achieved?

Ruben: If I had to summarize it, I would say that we have achieved a progressive but very significant reduction in the time spent on manual tasks, a notable improvement in security, and a cost optimization, with an efficiency gain in operations of around 35%.

"The reduction of manual tasks, improved security, and around 35% optimization in system operating costs allow us to accelerate and keep moving forward with a future-focused vision"

Every change has contributed to a very positive overall result, positioning us better to face new challenges with a medium- and long-term vision.

And how would you rate the collaboration with IThinkUPC?

Ruben: They have been — and continue to be — a reliable and committed partner. Their expertise and professionalism have given us confidence at every stage of the project, and their flexibility and adaptability have been essential. They understood from day one that we needed continuous, progressive improvement, and have worked side-by-side with us to make it happen.

Toni, how would you evaluate the collaboration from your side?

Toni: Simon placed their trust in us, and it has been both easy and enriching to work with them in this format, which has proven to be a great fit throughout the project.

This is an ongoing collaboration with new challenges ahead. We like it when clients see us as partners, and we'll continue to align with their objectives to deliver maximum value.

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