

# VNR Builds Cloud-Optimal Platform after AWS Training and Certification



German publishing house VNR AG (VNR) has a simple mission: to make expert knowledge accessible to everyone. Founded in 1976, the company has published more than 300 volumes in law, investment, health, and workplace environments. It provides customers with expert information, services, online communities, and portals, as well as training and conferences. As the company grew, groups within VNR served end customers through their own platforms and processes; in late 2018, VNR sought to consolidate and streamline operations with a self-service marketplace platform for omnichannel marketing and fulfillment services. The goal of this marketplace, dubbed Platform X, was to help small and midsize business owners scale through recurring customer relationships and subscription revenues using premium marketing automation and qualified marketing reach.

VNR knew that such a platform solution would require innovative technology for its big data and digital product development. Further, VNR knew it first had to provide its own staff with the knowledge to build a scalable platform in the cloud. So VNR turned to Amazon Web Services (AWS) for not only the technology but also the know-how, taking advantage of AWS Training and Certification to equip its team on how to effectively use AWS services to develop Platform X. Within 3 months of starting the first class, the VNR team had learned the skills it needed to get started on building a successful platform in the AWS Cloud and drive adaptation in marketing automation and fulfillment services.

## Landing on AWS as the Ideal Cloud Platform

In the early days of ideation for Platform X, VNR brought in data scientist Marc Müller as the new head of data. Müller and his team knew they wanted Platform X to be scalable, have high availability, and enable faster time to market for customers. Müller had used AWS while working with machine learning startups and was well acquainted with the cloud provider's breadth of technologies. And he knew that if VNR wanted to build fast on AWS, it couldn't just experiment or rely on self-education. "You only get professionalism through training and repeated practice on a daily basis," says Müller.

In total, the company had about 30 developers across 4 teams (DevOps, data, digital products, and fulfillment services). Some had more experience on AWS than others, but VNR determined that essential training on AWS was critical for all team members to enable collaboration through a common skill level and vocabulary.



**Company:** VNR  
**Industry:** Media & Entertainment  
**Country:** Germany  
**Website:** [vnrag.de](http://vnrag.de)

## About VNR

VNR AG is a Germany-based specialty publishing house that has published more than 300 works on law, investment, health, and workplace environments. The company also provides expert information, services, online communities, and portals, as well as training, conferences, and qualification products.

## Benefits

- Trained a staff of 30 developers within 3 months
- Enabled the deployment of 5 products, built on AWS, that generate revenue
- Enabled a serverless and highly scalable data platform
- Enabled 2 full-time employees to focus on other high-value work

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**Marc Müller,**  
*Head of data, VNR*

Preparing the team in advance with the expectations of the training was important, says Müller: “It really helped that we knew what we wanted from the training, the core interests of the participants.” Müller and other VNR team members attended an AWS Summit, talked to other companies in Germany about their experience, referenced product documentation, and connected with the business development team from AWS Training and Certification to put together a plan to get started in the AWS

## **Cloud.Learning to Teach the AWS Cloud**

In June 2019, VNR conducted an onsite classroom training for its IT teams, enabling independent development in the AWS environment. VNR then started rolling out role-specific training through several courses. Developing on AWS covers how to use the AWS SDK to develop secure and scalable cloud applications. Big Data on AWS covers cloud-based big data solutions such as Amazon EMR, Amazon Redshift, Amazon Kinesis, and the rest of the AWS big data platform. And DevOps Engineering on AWS covers a combination of DevOps cultural philosophies, practices, and tools to increase an organization’s ability to develop, deliver, and maintain applications and services at high velocity on AWS. VNR found that the hands-on assignments during the courses were critical, especially when it pulled together members from different development teams for small security-related projects. “This helped also to improve knowledge exchange in the company and brought developers together who don’t normally have any intersections,” says Müller.

By July, the team had completed the role-specific courses, and in September, VNR introduced Security Engineering on AWS to help the team members gain knowledge of AWS best practices; this gave them an opportunity to talk about their challenges and find solutions. Müller asked everyone who took the training to create their own proof-of-concept project and present it to the group. “They were able to get their own practical experience and learn from their colleagues,” says Müller. “A strict timeline and a little social pressure helped everyone stay focused on learning.”

Being able to ask questions of an AWS expert instructor with the benefits of that hands-on experience made the learning very applicable, and the classroom training proved to be a benefit. “The interactive format of AWS Training and Certification helped the people to come into all of these topics, go deeper, and see what was possible,” says Müller. “By the end, everyone understood why we needed a scalable platform.”

After the training, developers presented the AWS Cloud to the business, which helped accelerate change management and the overall transformation of the business with the AWS Cloud. “The training doesn’t make everyone into a solutions architect, but getting contact with technology and context on why it was important made everyone more effective.” VNR called its AWS training the best corporate training it had ever received.

## **Putting AWS Knowledge to Good Use**

Equipped with expert knowledge on how to make the best use of AWS services, the Platform X team was free to innovate. “Now that the team is at a certain level on AWS, they can code, build, and test things,” says Müller. “People were so hooked on the technology that they started to do their own projects.” The company now has five new products deployed on the AWS Cloud that are in production and earning revenue, as well as a highly scalable data platform, while the security best practices from the course helped to create state-of-the-art security services. This is especially important for respecting customers’ privacy and maintaining compliance with the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation.

VNR has also been able to automate processes in online marketing analytics, which has helped the company move two full-time employees—who previously manually collected and merged files—to more high-value work. And throughout the process, VNR has avoided reliability or scaling issues.

“Performance bottlenecks, which were common before, simply don’t exist anymore,” says Müller.

## **Building a Future on AWS Training and Certification**

After robust work on AWS Training and Certification, VNR was able to make optimal use of AWS services as it developed Platform X. The team is now working on AWS Certification, which helps companies build effective, innovative teams for cloud initiatives using AWS. “We make sure our consultancy partners have certifications, and it’s something that I look for on the CVs of new employees I look to hire,” says Müller. “This gives me another indication of what they have done in the past that can apply here.”

After undergoing AWS Training and Certification, VNR is better equipped to fulfill its mission of making expert knowledge accessible by first making such knowledge accessible internally. “Although every developer is capable of self-education,” says Müller, “most don’t take the time to go home and study documentation. The AWS training helped those who would be actively working on AWS get the introduction they needed.”

To learn more, visit <https://aws.amazon.com/training>