CASE STUDY

Streamlining the infrastructure that powers Handshake's recruitment platform

spacelift

Handshake

830
Company size

220
Engineering team size

The team is focused on using Spacelift to enhance collaboration and developer velocity.

Spacelift emerged as the logical solution over Hashicorp due to its cost-effectiveness.

Exceptional support from the Spacelift team helps Handshake move fast and innovate.

Summary

Online recruiting platform Handshake connects students of all backgrounds with meaningful career opportunities. Eliminating risk without slowing down is key to their infrastructure ambitions, so when it was time to upgrade their Terraform provider, they chose the Spacelift platform as a cost-effective alternative with the features and support they needed to balance speed and control.

Founded in 2014 and now partnered with more than 1,500 educational institutions, recruitment pioneer Handshake focuses on streamlining the process of finding meaningful career opportunities for graduates. It extends that innovative approach to its infrastructure management, ensuring its engineering team can consistently deliver for employers and job seekers. Cloud infrastructure engineer Joey Liu spoke to us about how Spacelift has helped Handshake transform their productivity in a cost-effective way.

The challenge for Handshake

Handshake is an advanced user of infrastructure as code (IaC), managing all its resources using this process. Their lead time to change is minutes or hours, and they successfully deploy to production 20 to 30 times per day. The company organizes its infrastructure in a single monorepo with separate stacks for each team or microservice. Each stack is set up with role-based access control (RBAC) based on Okta groups, which empowers teams to manage their own infrastructure. Modules are organized in a folder within the monorepository.

Before moving to Spacelift, Handshake used Hashicorp's Terraform Cloud for its IaC, but a change in the company's pricing model increased the cost exponentially. The solution's performance did not justify the high price, often lagging between available agent runs and failing to provide sufficient control of the agents themselves. It was time for Handshake to look for a new way to manage their infrastructure.

Why Handshake chose Spacelift

Joey heard about Spacelift from a colleague, and the platform also cropped up frequently as he researched potential infrastructure management solutions online. "We knew it was an industry-leading tool for infrastructure-as-code management by reading through various publications and digging into the features and capabilities," he recalls.

He requested a demo and discovered how easily the Handshake team could replicate their previous setup with Spacelift. He was also keen to learn how they could extend self-service infrastructure to their engineers, and the demo provided answers to all his architectural and procedural questions about how they could safely deliver enhanced autonomy to the team.

Ultimately, Spacelift emerged as the logical solution for Handshake due to its cost-effectiveness and the wealth of features that aligned with the company's ambitions.

> The support around OpenTofu also gave us confidence in the long-term investment in Terraform and the open-source community.
>
> **Joey Liu**
> Cloud Infrastructure Engineer at Handshake

Handshake's Spacelift experience

The migration to Spacelift took about three months and was relatively painless. "The UI/UX is very intuitive, and there was a minimal learning curve coming from a more expensive solution" recalls Joey. "The Spacelift team was very engaged and helpful throughout the process, meeting regularly with our engineering team not only to discuss and confirm the plan but also to provide support and tooling to ensure our success throughout the project."

That close engagement is a hallmark of the Handshake-Spacelift relationship. For example, when the Handshake team needed support reauthenticating their workloads to Google Cloud while maintaining their current stacks and state, they received invaluable help from Spacelift in working through different challenges with Workload Identity. "Spacelift makes IaC easy and has great support for any IaC questions. We feel more like a customer than a number, and we get timely responses from the team whenever any sort of issue bubbles up or we need guidance," says Joey.

Spacelift's impact on Handshake

Handshake is still in the initial stages of their Spacelift experience. "We're very comfortable with the basic features of the platform and have no issues with our infrastructure-as-code deployments," says Joey. "We primarily leverage Spacelift stacks as well as the Terraform Registry, but as we mature we are looking forward to potentially switching over to Terragrunt, as well as adopting OpenTofu for our infrastructure codebase."

The team has big plans for using Spacelift to enhance collaboration and boost developer velocity. They are keen to explore other platform features that will give engineers more opportunities for self-service experience and infrastructure ephemerality.

"Working with Spacelift has been an extremely pleasant experience for Handshake with a minimal learning curve for our direct team managing IaC and the Spacelift platform," says Joey. It was also easy for the direct team to roll out Spacelift to other users in the company. "The platform itself is very intuitive to use and has led to no increase in support volume internally." And it's not just about the platform: The people behind it reinforce Handshake's ambition to democratize access to opportunity with its innovative recruitment solution.

"The Spacelift team and support we have received have been exceptional, which in turn gives us the confidence to move fast and innovate to improve our users' experience. We're looking forward to partnering with the Spacelift team to continue to mature our IaC practices and consume new capabilities along the way to make this possible", concludes Joey.

This could be your story

Empower your platform team with Spacelift.

Liftoff with Spacelift!