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OUR BUSINESS

Datacentrix is a leading, empowered ICT integrator that provides high performing and secure ICT solutions to corporate South Africa and the country's public services sector. The company listed on the JSE Limited in 1998.

OUR MISSION

Datacentrix strives to maximise stakeholder wealth by providing leading solutions in the core ICT areas of infrastructure, business solutions, outsourcing and other related IT services to enterprise South Africa.

To achieve this, Datacentrix invests in its people through training and education, embracing broad-based black economic empowerment, while actively partnering and representing leading technology partners with distinction.

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- Hewlett-Packard
- Mimecast
- Riverbed
- Softline Accpac

Datacentrix announces positive interim results, with revenue and EBITDA growth of 22 percent and 10 percent

Datacentrix has announced positive interim financial results for the six months ended 31 August 2010. The Group showed revenue and EBITDA growth of 22 percent and 10 percent respectively.

The Group continues to maintain solid operational disciplines across the business, generating strong operating cash flows of R64 million, resulting in a cash balance of R294 million with no interest bearing debt. Tangible net asset value improved by 7 percent from 187 cents to 200 cents per share. Gross revenue increased to R836 million from R688 million, notwithstanding an extremely inhibited public sector performance.

Both headline earnings per share (HEPS) and basic earnings per share (EPS) increased by 4 percent.

According to Datacentrix CEO, Ahmed Mahomed, all divisions performed well, with the exception of the public sector unit, due to a slow down in government spending on IT and related infrastructure.

"We are encouraged by the performance of the Managed Services division, which improved earnings by 32 percent, in line with the Group's strategy to evolve from a basic infrastructure and services provider to a complete IT solutions partner. Owing to this positive performance, the Group maintained double-digit EBITDA margins of 10.5 percent," he says.

Furthermore, the Infrastructure division, the Group's principal revenue earner, contributed 61 percent to group earnings. Says Mahomed: "The commercial sector performed well as a result of new client wins and spin-offs from the 2010 Soccer World Cup, cushioning the impact ensuing from decreased activity in existing clients, declining technology costs and a diminished technology footprint." He adds that in terms of business emanating from the public sector, this segment of the market remains under severe constraints.

The State Information Technology Agency (SITA) confirmed in a media briefing in September 2010 that government spending has been drastically reduced in the last two years. In the briefing, SITA indicated that government is the single largest information and communication technology (ICT) spender in the South African market. SITA placed government's share of the total ICT market at 15 percent over the last two years,

well below the approximate 40 to 50 percent it has previously constituted.

"Whilst there is robust tender activity in this market segment, very few of these tenders are being awarded. This situation has an effect of decreased revenues, without the ability to reduce or redeploy resources focused on the public sector," says Mahomed.

Datacentrix believes that this trend will continue in light of the pressure on the fiscus - resultant from the 2010 Soccer World Cup expenditure, wage demands from public sector employees and lower tax collections.

"Management is satisfied that the Group's strategic decision to develop into a total IT solutions provider has borne fruit and positions Datacentrix for its next growth phase. Mahomed believes that the challenging economic climate for the sector will continue to fuel consolidation in the market, offering opportunities to access new clients and invest in further resources."

"However, despite the diminished contribution of the public sector segment to group revenues, our performance showed a healthy improvement," emphasises Mahomed, confirming his previous statement that the Group is gaining market share in the commercial and managed services areas.

In terms of investments, the strategic investment made by Datacentrix in the Managed Services division has increased the Group's annuity revenue.

Further investments, in the period under review, were made in a variety of value-based offerings ranging from selective outsourcing, managed print services, data centre solutions capability and storage solutions. These have also contributed positively to group profitability. "During the past six months, we strengthened our data centre and security capabilities. These capabilities form part of the Group's strategy to be a leading service provider of data centre solutions encompassing all disciplines of architecture, implementation and maintenance, and include cloud-based computing expertise," says Mahomed.
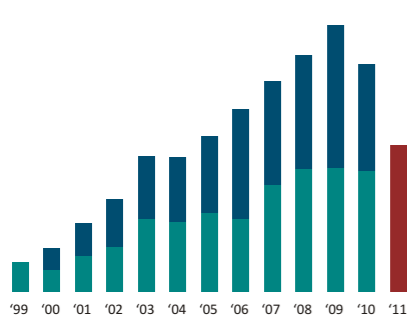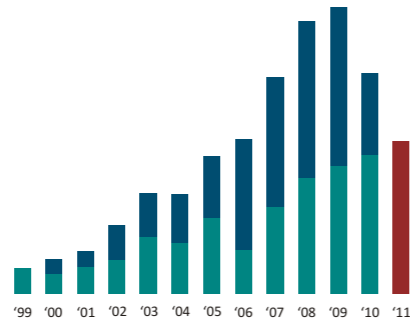
Continued from page 1

Management is satisfied that the Group's strategic decision to develop into a total IT solutions provider has borne fruit and positions Datacentrix for its next growth phase. Mahomed believes that the challenging economic climate for the sector will continue to fuel consolidation in the market, offering opportunities to access new clients and invest in further resources. "Our strong focus and investments made to position ourselves as leaders in the data centre space will continue, and

together with our key partners, we will leverage our competencies that include unified communications, infrastructure security, biometrics and access management, networking, data centre and desktop virtualisation.
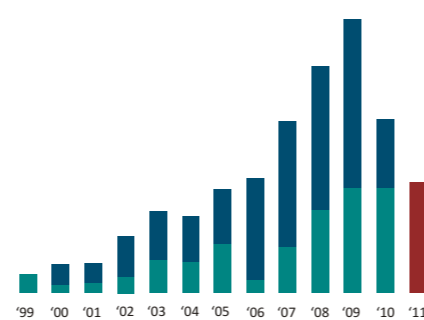
"In summary, I am of the opinion that these positive interim results and the success of our strategy are due to Datacentrix' ability to anticipate technology adoption and client needs and to develop appropriate offerings," concludes Mahomed.

'99 '00 '01 '02 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 '08 '09 '10 '11

REVENUE - R836 million

'99 '00 '01 '02 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 '08 '09 '10 '11

EBITDA - R88 million

'99 '00 '01 '02 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 '08 '09 '10 '11

HEPS - 27.9 cents

Datacentrix Gauteng to come together at new Midrand headquarters in November

Significant growth within Datacentrix, which now has close to 900 permanent employees and 200 contractors, has been the driving force behind the centralisation of the Gauteng operations at Sage Corporate Park North in Midrand, an attractive, highly visible complex that has recently undergone major renovation.

Clients will benefit from this centralisation as it will lead to improved productivity and operational efficiencies, maximise common facilities, facilitate quicker and easier interfacing between the business units themselves as well as with clients and reduce support and services travelling time.

The new headquarters is situated less than five kilometres from the Datacentrix warehouse. Travel wise, these offices are almost centrally located for staff that operated from the Lynnwood and Woodmead locations.

Existing leases will expire at the end of the year and the relocation, which will consolidate the Datacentrix organisation, is planned for mid-November with the business units moving according to a planned schedule.

The new services building will house all units situated in the Woodmead, Lynnwood and Services office block in Samrand.

"The move and consolidation marks a significant development in the history of Datacentrix and provides a platform for future growth," says Datacentrix CEO, Ahmed Mahomed.

Datacentrix appoints new HR head

Datacentrix has announced the appointment of Rejoice Mamphitha as its new head of Human Resources (HR).

Starting her career in 1999 as an HR officer at De Beers, the world's largest diamond producer, Mamphitha was responsible for talent attraction and retention before she was transferred to the company's Employee Relations (ER) department, where she gained most of her ER skills. She was employed by De Beers for four years before leaving the country for a year.

After returning to South Africa in 2003, Mamphitha was employed by high profile companies including Woolworths and Alexander Forbes, as well as manufacturing organisation, Steinhoff International and consulting and staffing firm, Express Employment Professional.

During her tenure at Express, she wrote regular Workplace HR articles for the Pretoria News and was requested to travel to the head office of Express in Oklahoma, USA, to enlighten shareholders on broad-based black economic empowerment.

Mamphitha holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Human Resources Management from the University of South Africa (UNISA) and has been accredited in the capacities of assessor, skills development facilitator and as a Thomas International personal profile analyser.

"Rejoice is highly qualified and has extensive experience in her field of expertise," says Ahmed Mahomed, Datacentrix CEO. "We have full confidence in her ability to add value to the organisation and wish her well in her new role."

Datacentrix wins multi-million rand Exxaro outsourcing deal

Deon Insel: Senior Account Manager, Geoff Chandler: Outsourcing Business Unit Manager, Vernon Tutton: Managing Director, Managed Services, Berdine Rademeyer: Service Desk Manager, Dries van der Walt: Divisional Director and Shawn Winterburn: Outsourcing Sales Specialist

Datacentrix has secured a multi-million rand outsourcing project with South Africa based mining group, Exxaro, after an eighteen month lengthy and detailed tender process.

The implementation, which encompasses the outsourcing of Exxaro's operations integration management, enterprise services management and services around the company's site, network, servers and storage, covers a three year period.

According to Datacentrix CEO, Ahmed Mahomed, the organisation has been tasked with moving Exxaro's total user base of 4,700 employees at thirteen sites to the Datacentrix service desk and the Datacentrix operations centre as an initial step.

"The investment that Datacentrix made into its outsourcing business unit has certainly come to fruition with the awarding of the Exxaro tender," states Mahomed. "Datacentrix competed for the business against all the well established outsource players in the market and succeeded in securing this bid. This affirms our competence, compelling value proposition and cements our position as a player to be reckoned with within the outsourcing space."

Softline Accpac appoints Datacentrix as a solution provider

Johan Hanekom, Account Manager at Datacentrix and Jeremy Waterman, Managing Director at Softline Accpac

Local business software provider, Softline Accpac has appointed leading ICT integrator, Datacentrix as a solution provider for Sage ERP X3, its full-service enterprise management software system for mid-market businesses. Jeremy Waterman, Managing Director of Softline Accpac says the appointment will assist in further establishing Sage ERP X3 as a dominant ERP software solution on the continent.

"Datacentrix is one of the most successful ICT companies in South Africa with an impressive footprint. Offering infrastructure, managed services and business solutions within the public and private sectors, the reseller agreement enables the company to offer a world-renowned ERP solution to new and existing clients."

Johan Hanekom, Account Manager at Datacentrix says the company evaluated a number of software vendors and their products in South Africa and identified Softline Accpac as a company that Datacentrix would like to partner with. "Sage ERP X3 is a true tier two product with deep functionality that outperforms most of its opposition. It is also realistically priced and has an excellent functionality to price ratio."

Hanekom says Datacentrix was also impressed with Softline Accpac's professional approach and high level of support offered to partners as well as the company's track record and brand awareness in the African market.

The decision to focus on the Sage ERP X3 solution was based on its ability to offer Datacentrix strong functionality in manufacturing and distribution. "These are two areas where we have traditionally played but needed deeper functionality. Sage ERP X3 has this ability and so much more. Softline Accpac also has a good vision for the product with a solid development road map," says Hanekom.

Waterman says the partnership is a win-win situation for both companies. Datacentrix has a vision to become a leading ERP solution provider in the South African mid-market and Softline Accpac is recognised as one of the strongest players in this sector. The launch of Sage ERP X3 has only further strengthened the company's position and potential as a market leader. "Datacentrix has a proven track record in deploying ERP solutions and will continue to do this with Sage ERP X3, but now in the native product."

Having a good understanding of client needs, Hanekom says Datacentrix also wanted a solution that is simple and directly addresses pain points as well as adding measurable value. "CIO's are under pressure to deliver solutions that have a positive return on investment. Another critical requirement for an ERP solution is to assist in the compliance of the organisation when it comes to legislation and standards like IFRS, ISO, and HACCP. We believe that Sage ERP X3 will more than meet the needs of our clients."

He says that addressing an increased demand for mobility was another key consideration for Datacentrix. Sage ERP X3 came out top again because it is based on flexible, open architecture oriented towards Web services and can cater for up to 2,000 simultaneous users within an organisation.

"Datacentrix is now able to provide different packages for the ERP needs of its clients. There are also several synergies, which can now be created within the group using Sage ERP X3," concludes Hanekom.

Sage ERP X3 is a top international ERP software solution, produced by the Sage Group plc, parent company to Softline. With over 6.1 million customers and 13,400 employees, Sage is a global market leader in the field of business management software and services.

Information and content management critical for King III corporate governance

Dr. Revere Thomson from Tygerberg Hospital: speaker at the ECM Western Cape Breakfast Forum on Corporate Governance and Trish Dicks: Datacentrix Strategic Account Manager

The accurate management of information and content is critical in all private sector and government establishments, including large corporate organisations listed or not, state run enterprises, local- or provincial governments and national government departments. The precise control of these intelligent assets has become particularly relevant since the King III Governance initiative became effective on 1 March 2010.

"Information and content needs to be effectively managed," says Derek Weatherall, Enterprise Content Management Service Delivery Manager at Datacentrix, a black empowered information technology (IT) company providing computing power, business value and information management solutions to corporate and government sectors.

Weatherall adds that information and content management has become a priority for businesses endeavouring to achieve and adhere to the corporate governance principles contained in King III - the collective name for the two King Reports on governance and the practice notes to King III issued by the Institute of Directors.

"In current environments, Enterprise Content Management (ECM) is a means by which corporate and government entities can successfully implement and benefit from correct governance of IT. This provides a springboard from which to achieve the essential governance elements of King III."

Weatherall defines IT Governance as executive management's ability to manage, measure and evaluate the use of an organisation's IT resources and assets to facilitate and enable the achievement of its strategic objectives.

> **"The bottom line is that information, resident in the IT solutions and resources of any organisation, has become a critical asset for companies and needs to be managed accordingly."**

"Resources can be deployed effectively to manage the required information and content and drive the alignment of IT governance with strategic objectives. Measurable value will be delivered, risk managed, and the use and performance of corporate resources optimised."

The bottom line is that information, resident in the IT solutions and resources of any organisation, has become a critical asset for companies and needs to be managed accordingly.

"ECM is not a means to an end," says Weatherall. "It is a journey to adopt the principles and governance compliance of King III, over the medium- to long-term. We have the resources, the know-how and the technology to assist companies through the phases of compliance with King III."

Datacentrix believes that free enterprise prospers in an environment of "good and balanced" corporate governance. Weatherall says while the company understands that achieving good governance is a complex task, it also believes that sound governance practices offer many practical benefits.

"Organisations should integrate such practices into their daily operational processes and this can be achieved with a sound, well implemented ECM solution and programme."

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BPM - a key business enabler

Erik du Toit: Account Manager, Datacentrix ECM and BPM Solutions, Sytze Visser: Business Unit Manager, Datacentrix ECM and BPM Solutions, Sonnia Buitendag: Services Manager, Datacentrix BPM Solutions

Organisations are not spending enough time analysing their business and defining key processes step by step, resulting in the failure to align business needs and requirements, says Erik du Toit, Account Manager at Datacentrix. Du Toit believes business process management (BPM) has become one of the most important enterprise requirements in all market segments. From a daily operational perspective, he says, BPM allows the organisation to align all aspects of the business with its specific wants and needs.

"BPM allows for a holistic management approach that promotes business effectiveness and efficiency while striving for innovation, flexibility, and integration with technology," says du Toit. He argues that BPM, by default, improves the processes in the organisation and allows the business to monitor, analyse, control and improve processes more efficiently and effectively. "In short, BPM is a key business driver," du Toit notes.

Adopting Flexibility
With the ever-changing business environment, du Toit says organisations need to adopt strategies for flexibility that accommodate constant change. He singles out globalisation as one of the most interesting economic developments that must be taken into account by any organisation when implementing BPM. "Constant change presents a number of challenges to organisations, with specific focus on the enterprise's core business processes. Static core processes are not enough to keep pace with the ever-changing dynamics of business today. The focus needs to be on process flexibility that allows for change," he says.

Du Toit adds that the BPM strategy needs to be dynamic, scalable and incorporate quickly adaptable processes that are built around the business. According to him, organisations' IT frameworks must also support agility and flexibility imperatives.

Process Integrity
In regards to governance, du Toit labels it a "must have" that ensures smooth delivery of BPM. "Business needs to link business rules to business processes and business users, to create a direct correlation between company policy and business activities," he says. "This will increase the level of governance within organisations."

Du Toit adds that governance is essential in ensuring process integrity, enabling users to be aware of how to manage decisions according to their goals and policies. The focus needs to be on managing business changes separately, to allow all processes to be automatically updated simply by making the change in one central location, notes du Toit.

Function-focused Tools
"A successful BPM project begins with well-defined requirements," says du Toit, adding there is a myth that software tools alone will address BPM strategies in organisations. "This is not true. Organisations need to understand and have well-documented processes with a good understanding of their processes prior to investigating technology that fits," he argues.

BPM, by default, improves the processes in the organisation, allowing the business to operate more efficiently and effectively, says du Toit. Defining business requirements, minus technology or tools, can also come in handy as a cost effective strategy.

"Defining your business requirements clearly and accurately speeds up the software development processes and leads to dramatic savings for organisations. Software development projects suffer most when changes in requirements come into play. This constitutes delays, revisions, and rework, which contributes to additional cost."

> **"BPM allows for a holistic management approach that promotes business effectiveness and efficiency while striving for innovation, flexibility, and integration with technology."**

Du Toit says when modelling their business applications and systems, organisations should have a close look at their systems and the extensibility of these systems to address BPM integration components. Secondly, he advises companies to find the correct software tools to fit their environments. This decision would be based on how the tools or process enablers fit across the company's framework, and whether they will link disparate business systems in an effective way. "Find the tool that will provide the functionalities and features required within your organisation."

A Wise Investment
According to du Toit, companies should invest in BPM to analyse and document their business processes end-to-end. From a software perspective, he says that the BPM tool will allow for an integrated suite of components across the enterprise that will allow the business to automate processes throughout.

"Investment in BPM will allow organisations to reduce turnaround time on requests, increase throughput, user efficiency and performance," he says. "This will also contribute to decreased paper printing consumables, meeting legislative requirements, compliance, and will allow for process tracking as well as status reporting at any time."

He adds that BPM will allow for audit trails of activities performed by users and systems and will monitor bottlenecks in each process, to help assist in enhancing these processes.

Great Basin Gold turns to Cisco network solution from Datacentrix

International gold mining company Great Basin Gold, listed on the New York, Toronto and Johannesburg stock exchanges, has completed the implementation of a highly secure IT network at its local headquarters in Sandton in collaboration with Datacentrix.

As a major vendor in South Africa for international networking solutions, Datacentrix provided Great Basin Gold (GBG) with Cisco networking equipment and an initial network design, later fine-tuned to meet GBG's very specific requirements.

A major driver behind the new networking solution is to ensure that GBG continues to fully comply with the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation that has become the benchmark for new and enhanced financial reporting and compliance standards for all United States public companies and public accounting firms.

"The network design phase took two weeks and the required Cisco networking equipment was imported from the distribution centre in Belgium," says GBG Sandton Network Administrator, Arnold de Bruin. "We are audited twice a year for Sarbanes-Oxley compliance and it is a complex process that needs to take place in a streamlined but highly secure environment."

The Cisco networking solution provides very high levels of control and tracking. De Bruin says it also automatically delivers the specific reports required by Sarbanes-Oxley, logs every transaction and produces a complete daily data log and back-up.

"The end result is a solution that provides a full audit trail of the business in the form of logs that can be extracted from the Cisco system. It is impossible to alter or manipulate the transaction logs, offering GBG solid protection and ensuring compliance."

Cisco fully integrates with Microsoft Active Directory and de Bruin says this ensures that people who do not have the required permission status will not be able to access the system compliance data.

Duncan van Jaarsveld, Business Unit Manager of Datacentrix' Infrastructure Networking business unit, says that to attain the high level of security required, Cisco ASA Firewalls were installed and the Catalyst 4500 chassis was selected to address the networking needs. Cisco WAN accelerators are also being used to provide high-speed, non-stop networking on the backbone links.

GBG operates the Burnstone gold mine near Balfour south-east of Johannesburg. A shallow, low cost, low risk mine, it is scheduled to be fully commissioned at the end of this year. Average annual production is expected to be more than 250,000 ounces of gold and the mine life projection is nineteen years.

The company has another major gold mine, Hollister, which operates in Nevada in the United States.

HP MultiSeat Computing drives efficiencies

The new HP MultiSeat with Microsoft (MS) Multipoint Computing Solution is a step up from the traditional thin client technology. The advancements made to this offering allow for increased efficiencies in the areas of usability, installation and system maintenance as well as improvements in power consumption and overall resource management, resulting in a far more cost effective solution.

The HP MultiSeat with MS Multipoint Computing Solution is geared towards any environment where low-cost-per-seat computing is a requirement and is best suited to, but not limited to, the Education, Call Centre and Business Administration arenas.

By providing computing abilities to multiple users through a connection to a single PC, the HP MultiSeat with MS Multipoint solution eliminates the need for high volume, expensive and complicated hardware installations. The solution basically doubles the number of computing seats available, with up to ten users being connected through a single configuration.

HP developed the MultiSeat with MS Multipoint Computing Solution in conjunction with Microsoft to ensure clients have a fully legal, licensed and supported solution and Multipoint 2010 is the only Microsoft supported operating system for PC sharing.

According to Datacentrix Business Unit Manager, Sunil Singh: "The pricing model is completely different to previous models for HP thin client solutions, making the HP MultiSeat solution more cost effective compared to other installations of this nature. Organisations do not need a full-blown IT installation to effectively run a specific environment. The result is an easily managed low cost IT infrastructure."

Apart from the benefit of maximising computing power without extra strain on an organisation's budget, the HP MultiSeat with MS Multipoint Computing Solution also presents simplified set-up and installation. With the

incorporation of plug-and-play USB functionality, the HP MultiSeat with MS Multipoint system allows for more flexibility and easy expansion. Simply add seats as and when required through the plug-and-play functionality built in. There is no need to load and configure any additional software and hardware, and no networking expertise is required. Each desktop is also customisable to suit the requirements of each individual user.

In terms of system maintenance, up-to-date security patches and operating system updates are seamlessly downloaded and implemented in the background without any disruptions to operations. HP furthermore ensures end-to-end support, from warranty to technical support.

Users will also find the familiar Windows operating system easy to operate and the centralised control capabilities will ensure more efficient management of the system. In a classroom environment, explains Singh, the teacher will be able to quickly reset and configure all terminals' settings to their original states, ready for the next batch of students to start the class.

The HP MultiSeat solution can assist organisations reduce their energy consumption and costs by up to 80 percent and is powered by a single, reliable HP Compaq MultiSeat Desktop with Windows MultiPoint Server 2010 to support the maximum ten user configuration. The physical footprint of the hardware is minimal with slim and small form factor monitors, keyboards and mouse configurations.

HP MultiSeat, with Microsoft®

EXPANDING MINDS AND RESOURCES

2010
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Datacentrix wins IT hardware support and servicing contract from Virgin Active

Datacentrix has won a contract to provide desktop and IT hardware support and services to the 92 Virgin Active Clubs in South Africa as well as its one club in Windhoek, Namibia.

Datacentrix' head of outsourcing in the Western Cape, Celma Marcus secured the deal in conjunction with Virgin Active Western Cape's Account Manager, Francois de Kock.

"Datacentrix ensured that Virgin Active was fully aware of its capability and focus on client service and we believe that it was this commitment to a client centric value add proposition that led to Virgin Active being a very satisfied client," says Marcus. She adds that the key to any successful outsourcing agreement is to appoint the right people in the right positions.

An on-site service desk has been established at Datacentrix to receive calls from Virgin Active. Service requests are logged, resolved and a full outcome report on each request is lodged in the system.

The IT hardware support and services were originally handled in-house by Virgin Active before the company made a business decision to outsource. Datacentrix then won the contract for the outsourced hardware support and services.

"We also took over the existing IT hardware support engineers at Virgin Active," says Adam Pitts, Service Delivery Manager for Virgin Active South Africa. "Virgin Active supported this as these former employees now have career paths and formed a knowledgeable core for the Datacentrix support team."

Four engineers are based in Gauteng where some forty Virgin Active clubs are operational. Other engineers are resident further a field in centres such as Durban, Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Nelspruit.

"We are a health company and our business focus is on people and their health," says Patrick Nightingale, National IT Manager for Virgin Active South Africa. "By outsourcing our IT hardware support, we have recorded

Patrick Nightingale, National IT Manager at Virgin Active, Celma Marcus: Head of Outsourcing at Datacentrix Western Cape, and Adam Pitts: National Service Delivery Manager for Virgin Active South Africa

a 60 percent improvement in services since the beginning of June 2010, so it has been a good move."

Nightingale adds that while IT is a vital tool for Virgin Active, without which it could not run its business, the company's core focus is not IT and outsourcing was seen as the way forward in the best interests of all concerned. "Datacentrix has been very responsive and supportive and there have been very few hitches in their service provision."

The scope of the Datacentrix service includes the installation, movement of, changes to and retirement of assets such as application software, operating software, configurations, desktop computers, printers and peripherals. It also features on-site technical assistance and error resolution, operating software assistance, hardware and replacement support to PCs, servers, card readers, play stations, disks, RAM and power supply replacement; and finally network support, including Wi-Fi routers, switches, network cables and fly leads.

Pitts says that there is ongoing communication, monitoring and management of the support and services provided. "Quarterly reviews of services rendered are conducted and assessments of requirements and improvements for the next quarter are also undertaken."

Virgin Active is part of the international Virgin Group owned by highly successful British entrepreneur Richard Branson and is focused on bringing positive change and improvements to its services to clients through a commitment to technology.

Your email management can be simplified thanks to Datacentrix and Mimecast

Datacentrix' latest technology partner, Mimecast, uses a balance of in-the-cloud and on-premise technology to quickly and easily solve the email problems that have traditionally plagued IT managers and users alike - with very few changes needed to hardware or network systems.

Top email issues include managing email outages, archiving emails so that they can be found quickly on demand, preventing confidential data leaking the organisation via email, and managing the increasing burden of spam and other malicious content. Mimecast also addresses other major areas of concern such as policy deployment and email branding.

Sytze Visser, Head of Enterprise Content Management at Datacentrix says, "These problems are exacerbated by the ever increasing volumes of email. In 2009, 247 billion messages were sent each day. A year before it was 210 billion per day. Now imagine, even once you discount the spam, how much business critical information is being carried across the Internet and stored who knows where or how."

Forrester estimates that email carries up to 80 percent of a company's current intellectual property, making it by far the most critical communications tool for today's businesses. "Yet for something so important, the physical email set up can look more like a technical rat's nest than a high tech communications system. It's this mass of critical but disparate technology, from the spam filter, to the firewall, to the backup tapes that causes many of the problems. It's the very complexity of the system that creates so many potential points of failure," says Sytze.

"Mimecast takes many of these components securely into the cloud. It cleans up the rat's nest and also ensures there is never a moment of email downtime, regardless of what is happening on the corporate network or Exchange server," says Grant Hodgkinson, Business Development Director at Mimecast.

The Internet-based service is quickly and easily overlaid onto existing email systems with 90 percent of all implementations being completed in less than a week. Its reduces the costs associated with managing, storing and transmitting email by as much as 65 percent, while improving how quickly and easily users can find vital emails regardless of whether they have been deleted or not.

A number of Datacentrix clients have successfully implemented Mimecast.

Grant Hodgkinson, Business Development Director at Mimecast

Harry Mellish: Senior Account Manager at Datacentrix and Freddie Mayer: SACD Freight IT Executive

South Africa Container Depot invests in high performance LAN infrastructure at new site

Import and export management company, SACD Freight (South African Container Depot), a Bidvest Group company, has successfully rolled out a new HP ProCurve LAN infrastructure, driving up network speed and performance at its new warehousing and administrative facility in Paarden Eiland, Cape Town. SACD partnered with Datacentrix to implement this project.

Says SACD Freight IT Executive, Freddie Mayer: "SACD relocated to a state-of-the-art purpose-built site at the end of 2009 and needed a cost effective, high performance new LAN infrastructure to be implemented to coincide with the move. After going out to tender, we selected Datacentrix to implement an end-to-end solution, including design, project management, data cabling, the installation of networking equipment and commissioning.

"Datacentrix was our partner of choice for this project as the company's offering measured up to our specific requirements. A key consideration was that it essentially operates as a 'one-stop shop', providing us with one point of accountability. In fact, the company partnered with a third party cabling provider to provide the cabling infrastructure but this was completely seamless from our point of view as it was entirely managed by Datacentrix.

"In addition, Datacentrix certainly provided us with evidence of its experience on high quality networking and security implementations and we found that we were given plenty of advice at every step," he states.

According to Harry Mellish, Senior Account Manager at Datacentrix, the networking design and implementation,

"Datacentrix was our partner of choice for this project as the company's offering measured up to our specific requirements. A key consideration was that it essentially operates as a 'one-stop shop', providing us with one point of accountability."

was completed by the Datacentrix team, which incorporated a large wireless installation - with both indoor and outdoor access points.

The project was successfully implemented within the stipulated budget and specified timelines to meet all of the SACD's project deliverables. Datacentrix is also handling ongoing maintenance and support at the site and we look forward to further enhancing our relationship with SACD in the future."

Datacentrix is an Authorised Select HP Value Added Reseller, which entitles the company to import and resell the entire range of HP products. In the HP StorageWorks division, Datacentrix is one of only two fully accredited HP Elite StorageWorks Partners.

Datacentrix is also a fully certified Authorised Support Provider, allowing it to perform warranty repairs on all HP commercial products as well as some of the HP enterprise products.

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unified email management

Datacentrix pledges support for MaAfrika Tikkun Youth development initiative

Datacentrix has donated R250,000 to the MaAfrika Tikkun Orange Farm Youth Development Centre, for a new computer room that was formally opened during a special ceremony attended by Datacentrix representatives on 12 October this year.

MaAfrika Tikkun is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation that works toward the transformation of South African communities by caring for vulnerable children and 'orphans' in townships.

Registered as a Black Economic Empowerment company in 2006, MaAfrika Tikkun is accredited as a level 2 BBBEE organisation. It has a multiracial and multicultural team and fosters empowerment by providing holistic services focused on caring for children between the ages of one and 19, as well as their guardians.

Former President Nelson Mandela has been the organisation's chief patron since inception and still is. He has hailed MaAfrika Tikkun programmes as a "miracle" and has been quoted as saying: "MaAfrika Tikkun demonstrates in a practical and sustainable

The opening of the computer room for the MaAfrika Tikkun Orange Farm Youth Development Centre

manner what can be done with limited resources, great commitment and passion. It is my belief that MaAfrika Tikkun represents the best of what civil society can offer in partnership with government's considerable efforts."

The organisation's vision is to promote and organise projects together with communities, through leadership that strives to "uplift, build and ultimately transform the disadvantaged communities of South Africa, which have been affected for decades by the ravages of extreme poverty, disease and the psychological effects resulting from these living conditions."

Says Ahmed Mahomed, Datacentrix CEO: "Datacentrix is supportive of this vision and the objectives of MaAfrika Tikkun and is privileged to have been part of this initiative by providing the funding for the new computer centre, which will be an important resource for the youth development programmes."

The computer room and its facilities will also help to ensure that the skills of MaAfrika Tikkun's professional staff are fully utilised to transfer knowledge for the development of other organisations also committed to provide quality services to the entire community. The child and youth programmes motivate, facilitate and provide opportunities for children and youth to gain practical experience and insight into a future as self-actualised citizens of South Africa.

The programmes operate from Youth Development Centres of Excellence, which offer expertise in child and youth development as well as youth intern workplace experience. Two of the most critical elements in these centres are library multimedia facilities and the computer room.

KZN Provincial Treasury leads the way in Electronic Fraud Management

The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Treasury is visibly discouraging fraud, educating its personnel about electronic fraud, and, most importantly, protecting innocent people from being implicated in cases of this type of crime with eDNA, a transversal Electronic Fraud Management System (EFMS).

SITA, Datacentrix and its business partner, L@Wtrust, collaborated to assist the department in establishing this proactive approach in electronic fraud management.

According to Zweli Mkhize, the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, the value of the system is realised when one considers that, as a province, KZN controls a budget of R50 billion a year. "If one percent of these funds is lost through fraud it amounts to R500 million of taxpayers' money lost per year," explains Mkhize. "The escalation of computer-related crimes across the public and private sector made it necessary to take preventative measures to avoid fraud."

The KZN Treasury initially approached SITA with its requirements in this regard and Tubatsana Monareng and his Information Security team set out to find the ideal solution. From the outset it was clear - finding an enterprise class solution fit for the stringent requirements of KZN Treasury, suitable for the South African context, that would also work across multiple mainframe and open system applications and all the government departments of KZN Treasury and be compliant with the South African legislation as well as international good practices and standards, was not going to be an easy task.

"Given the significant risk of electronic fraud, KZN Treasury wanted to implement a consistent and pragmatic approach to enable the proactive management of electronic fraud as fast as possible to over 4,000 of its computer users scattered across the KZN province and operating from 16 federated government departments," explains Shakeel Jhazbhay, Enterprise Content Management Business Unit Manager for KwaZulu-Natal at Datacentrix.

"The department prioritised the protection of its core mainframe applications (BAS and PERSAL) for the initial phase of the plan."

The SITA team worked closely with KZN Treasury to refine and evaluate the department's business

requirements and found that it needed an enterprise class EFMS. The solution had to deliver strong multi-factor access control and identity management, PKI cryptography, context sensitive non-repudiation and forensic reporting capabilities.

Additionally it needed to be capable of working across disparate networks and support mainframe and open system applications. SITA and KZN Treasury collaborated in the evaluation of the available solutions and awarded a tender for the requirements to Datacentrix and L@Wtrust to implement the locally developed eDNA, EFMS solution suite.

"In essence, the eDNA solution behaves like an intelligent surveillance system inside the protected applications," explains Jhazbhay. "It 'records' changes to transactional information and can action business rules when sensitive behaviour is sensed."

The solution effectively yields an always-on, reliable and impartial witness to sensitive transactional data. It supports information integrity in that the eDNA Evidence Vault delivers a context sensitive audit trail that carries sufficient evidentiary weight of exactly who did what, and when it was done inside the application.

eDNA is an extensible and modular EFMS solution that makes it ideal for enterprise environments with transversal applications. The strong sign on module for example, eliminates password theft and abuse through secure multi-factor access control and identity management that is integrated with industry standard FIPS rated PKI, biometric and smartcard technology, which then interacts cryptographically with the eDNA Evidence Vault.

A high degree of reusability of system components makes for good investment protection and yields a cost-effective roadmap to expand the system to also protect other applications such as logistics, procurement and other line of business applications.

The Datacentrix offering spanned the entire solution lifecycle and Thansen Singh, Information Technology Manager for the KZN Provincial Treasury, said that his team rates its satisfaction with SITA and Datacentrix' team on this project as very high, and that they are now ready to start realising the benefits of people accountability in the digital world.

Datacentrix electronic DNA software solution saves Government millions

A locally developed electronic fraud management system is assisting the South African Department of Home Affairs to make strong headway in its mission to hold its employees accountable for unauthorised changes to the National Population Register and passport systems.

Developed by Datacentrix, together with its partner business, specialists in online security, L@Wtrust, the system, called eDNA (electronic DNA), is capable of protecting both mainframe as well as open systems applications to ensure a consistent approach to application security.

According to Rainer Jeske, Managing Director: Technology Solutions at Datacentrix, eDNA enables organisations to have a single consistent approach to strong application security and transaction level accountability across the organisation and platforms,

Rainer Jeske, Managing Director: Technology Solutions at Datacentrix

which can protect financial systems, personnel and payroll, procurement and other line of business applications that can be customised to suit organisational audit and evidence trail, as well as context sensitive non-repudiation requirements.

The solution offers multi-factor authentication, which overcomes the challenges with passwords. "The level of access control security is raised by several orders of magnitude via smartcard and fingerprint biometrics. Furthermore, we employ digital certificates and other strong cryptographic methods to secure the 'evidence vault' and protect the verification audit trail against manipulation to facilitate the ultimate level of end-user ownership and accountability for any sensitive transaction," explains Jeske.

He says that Home Affairs Biometric Access Control Management (BACM) functionality for the National Population Register mainframe system has been upgraded to the current generation eDNA, which provides much more than mere biometric access control management. It introduces multi-factor strong authentication and system access controls, in addition to context sensitive non-repudiation of sensitive user behaviour inside the protected applications.

Jeske adds that eDNA has benefited the Department and supports several of its objectives. "eDNA plays a crucial role in making people accountable for their interactions with sensitive data of the protected applications. The solution also protects the innocent against computer identity theft and guards the sensitive applications against unauthorised access."

A key feature delivered by eDNA is the context sensitive audit trail that provides legally admissible and indisputable evidence to ensure that offenders can be identified, prosecuted and convicted where applicable.

"It is a solution that is saving government millions of rands and there are huge potential benefits to the country as a whole if government funding and business processes are rendered in a totally secure manner," says Jeske. "At Home Affairs there simply was not enough information available within the NPR database to ensure a court appearance and achieve a conviction in many cases.

There were three major challenges facing Home Affairs in its efforts to prosecute. Firstly, the system had to

prove beyond any doubt that a particular individual had made a specific transaction. Secondly, the system had to be capable of fully tracking every sensitive transaction made and provide irrefutable proof of the identity of the individual or individuals involved in the transaction. Thirdly, the software had to record a complete audit trail for each and every sensitive transaction and prevent any manipulation of the evidence/audit trail - all of which can be delivered by the current generation eDNA system.

"The most satisfying benefit, brought about by the solution, is that there can be no implication of innocent, honest people," says Jeske. "Another really positive impact is that it is an immensely strong deterrent."

The Datacentrix experience with eDNA is that it raises security awareness across the entire workforce of the company or institution using it. All employees know that they are accountable for their actions and this leads to a positive change in mindset.

Jeske says the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (ECT), which facilitates and regulates electronic communications and transactions, provides for the legal validity of electronic evidence and that people can be held legally accountable for unauthorised data changes.

"eDNA provides the mechanisms and processes to make this possible. Passwords are not generally a good authentication and access control mechanism as they can be lost, stolen or even sold to syndicates who use them to execute fraud. eDNA also does away with passwords, which greatly improves the level of application security, prevents unauthorised access and promotes data integrity," he says.

The eDNA software is a service oriented architecture product, which is fully compliant with South African legal requirements. Furthermore, it was designed with South African Government in mind and therefore designed to work well with minimum bandwidth availability and limited IT infrastructure as found in some rural areas.

Jeske says that in an enterprise environment, accurate patch management is essential and we have developed the system with supportability in mind. "eDNA therefore has its own built-in software update manager through which central patch management and administration for the eDNA client software can be done, both across heterogeneous networks and directories," says Jeske.

At Home Affairs the solution architecture and design supports the exceptionally high availability of the solution with a single hour of unplanned downtime being considered unusual.

Mahomed joins Most Powerful Directors of 2010 brigade

Ahmed Mahomed, Datacentrix CEO, was recently named as one of South Africa's top 30 most powerful directors for 2010. In a recent article run by the Business Times section of the Sunday Times newspaper, Mahomed was listed alongside directors from some of the country's leading organisations, including MTN, First Rand, Exxaro, Tiger Brands and Telkom.

The listing was derived from research carried out by Citadel, the JSE, Business Times and Empowerdex, a Johannesburg-based empowerment rating and research agency, which tracked the progress of black economic empowerment within 400 JSE-listed companies by calculating the degree of influence exerted by various board directors.

Riverbed named global advanced platform WAN optimisation controller leader

Riverbed Secures Over 40% of the Advanced Platform WAN Optimisation Market

Riverbed Technology, the IT performance company, announced that Gartner has identified Riverbed® in its September 2010 report: "Market Share: Application Acceleration (AP) Equipment, Worldwide, 2Q10"[1], as the WOC (WAN optimisation controller) Advanced Platform worldwide market share leader for the second quarter of 2010 based on revenue. According to Gartner's market share report, Riverbed captured 40.3 percent of the AP WAN Optimisation market.

Enterprises and government organisations leverage Riverbed WAN optimisation to improve remote and mobile employee productivity, enable private clouds, and provide enterprise-wide network and application visibility. By speeding the performance of applications between remote offices, private data centres and mobile workers, in some cases by up to 100 times, Riverbed Steelhead® products enable companies to consolidate IT, improve backup and replication processes to ensure data integrity, and improve staff productivity and collaboration.

Over 8,300 customers, across a wide range of markets, have implemented Riverbed WAN optimisation solutions in their geographically dispersed organisations.

"We attribute our continued success to innovative product development and strong partner and customer relationships. We are laser-focused on solving the distance problem - where there is distance between humans and data we narrow the gap," said Eric Wolford, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Business Development at Riverbed. "As we communicate on an ongoing basis with our customer base to determine their ever-changing needs, we find that no matter which IT initiative they are embarking on to cut costs - whether it's branch office consolidation, data centre virtualisation, or migration to the cloud - they are forced to deal with the performance issues caused by distance inherent in a WAN environment.

As we introduce our upcoming cloud solutions and enter new markets, it is our goal to meet the needs of the global workforce by extending our technology to eliminate these performance barriers in new IT environments."

Extending the Reach of Riverbed WAN Optimisation Solutions

Riverbed recently extended the reach of its market-leading WAN optimisation solutions with the release of Virtual Steelhead, which enables customers to deploy Riverbed WAN optimisation solutions in a wider range of environments that may have specialised requirements, such as ruggedised environments or environments with space limitations, as well as data centres that have been heavily virtualised.

Accelerating Organisations' Pathway to the Cloud

Enhancements to the Riverbed Optimization System (RiOS®) provide the necessary tools to support critical IT initiatives such as private and public cloud computing. RiOS 6.1 enables organisations to overcome the performance hurdles of moving to cloud environments by providing new optimisations for a range of Microsoft suites including Exchange 2010, SharePoint, and Microsoft Online for SharePoint and Exchange. Riverbed is the only WAN optimisation vendor to provide enhanced acceleration and optimisation for organisations using Microsoft Online for SharePoint and Exchange.

Enabling the Branch Office Box

In addition to consolidation to private cloud environments, organisations are also spearheading efforts to consolidate branch office infrastructure. Riverbed offers the Riverbed Services Platform (RSP), a virtualised platform that enables organisations to run edge services such as local print, DNS, DHCP, video and firewall in a protected partition on a Steelhead appliance. With RSP, Riverbed customers can create a branch office box (BOB) that can run business-critical services in the branch while still reaping the benefits of consolidation, including simplified management, reduced IT footprint in the branch and lower costs.

[1] Gartner, Inc., Market Share: Application Acceleration Equipment, Worldwide, 2Q10" by Joe Skorupa and Nhat Pham, September 2010

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Samantha Proctor-Parker: Account Manager at Datacentrix,
Danie Kruger: IT Manager at Monier Roofing and Richard Tsalavoutas: Solutions Specialist at Datacentrix

Monier Roofing cuts costs with Riverbed optimisation technology from Datacentrix

Riverbed technology implemented by Datacentrix, has revolutionised the network, data back-up and replication at national roofing and chimney systems supplier, Monier Roofing.

"With nine manufacturing plants and three depots throughout South Africa, we were faced with data transfer and back-up speed problems," says Danie Kruger, IT Manager at Monier Roofing. "The first solution provider we approached wanted a hefty management fee on top of the cost of the Riverbed solution, effectively doubling the price. So we turned to Datacentrix, who handled our needs professionally and competently without the so-called management fee."

He adds that Monier Roofing has made a significant investment in its national network and the company is delighted with the results of the Riverbed Steelhead implementation. "It is literally paying for itself in just five months. We have not looked back since the first tests were conducted."

Running a Sage 9500 ERP system on a Microsoft SQL database and fat client, the large branch sites were being backed up using tapes, which led to a storage problem. Data transfer of 80GB a night on a 512kb line was also extremely tedious. With the Riverbed solution by Datacentrix in place, there was immediate improvement in bandwidth at the Monier Roofing head office in Constantia Kloof, Roodepoort, at the data centre and the remote branch sites, leading to significant optimisation of the Sage applications and back-ups.

"The outcome is that we are on average getting almost six times the capacity across all of the network traffic and full payback on the investment in Riverbed, inclusive of Datacentrix' implementation cost in less than six months," says Kruger.

"The user experience is massive. Transactions that used to take three seconds now take half a second. Our entire operation has been significantly speeded up. It is easy to over invest in IT solutions, but Datacentrix ensured we got full value for our investment by providing the perfect fit in terms of the Riverbed equipment required."

Other factors that have impressed Kruger include the obvious experience of the implementers, their knowledge of the technology and their after-implementation service. "I don't think any organisation could have handled this better. It really was a case of 'plug it in and run'. We were knocked out when we saw the advantages. We would have been having serious problems without this solution."

Kruger intends delivering a report on the Riverbed implementation at the Monier international company IT conference in Germany later this year. "I will happily recommend this Riverbed technology to other companies in the Monier Group. The bandwidth is cheaper overseas, but latency remains a problem that they will need to address with this type of solution."

Datacentrix is a platinum partner of Riverbed and has the largest Riverbed client base in South Africa. Richard Tsalavoutas, Riverbed Sales Specialist at Datacentrix, has confidence that the solution implemented at Monier Roofing will also pay dividends by delaying the need to upgrade hardware.

"I can't see Monier Roofing having to upgrade hardware for at least another eighteen months, probably longer," says Tsalavoutas.

"From a capacity point of view the Riverbed equipment will outlast Monier Roofing's servers. It delivers what is needed, so it is no wonder that Riverbed's popularity as the ultimate optimisation technology continues to climb worldwide."

Microsoft recognises Datacentrix skills in Unified Communications space

Microsoft South Africa bestowed a finalist award upon Datacentrix in the Unified Communications (UC) category at its annual Partner Conference held at Sun City in September. Brett Marais, Datacentrix' Business Unit Manager: Software Infrastructure Solutions, received the award.

"This was the first time Datacentrix has received recognition from Microsoft in the UC space," he said. "The nomination criteria were exceedingly stringent, and Datacentrix was extremely proud to be recognised as a finalist in this category."

He says that Datacentrix was presented the finalist award for its recent successful implementation of UC at a government institution, which had specific and critical communication requirements during the recent 2010 World Cup period. The solution included the provision of software-powered voice over Internet protocol (VoIP), unified conferencing - including audio, video, and Web as well as enterprise instant messaging.

"The business benefit to the client was the availability of a flexible solution with tools to help manage and secure compliant communications. At the same time, Datacentrix delivered an extensive communications platform that works with existing messaging and telephony infrastructure and can be adapted to changing business needs," he said.

Marais added that the achievement was testament to the hard work and focused specialisation of the Datacentrix team. With UC currently a hot topic in the industry, he said the award confirmed that Datacentrix is well positioned to provide value-driven solutions across all client segments in the UC area of expertise.

"The effort we put into answering an intensive questionnaire, submitting a detailed proposal, being short-listed and finally undergoing a face-to-face interview, was worthwhile. It confirms the quality of the solutions that we are providing."

Brett Marais, Datacentrix Business Unit Manager: Software Infrastructure Solutions

"The achievement was testament to the hard work and focused specialisation of the Datacentrix team. With UC currently a hot topic in the industry, the award confirmed that Datacentrix is well positioned to provide value-driven solutions across all client segments in the UC area of expertise."

The Microsoft partner conference was well attended with the highest number of delegates since 2007. There were many opportunities for delegates to gain a better understanding of Microsoft's strategic direction and to attend enlightening break-out sessions. Guest speakers discussed a number of interesting topics and included renowned explorer Kingsley Holgate and digital technology expert Arthur Goldstuck.

Microsoft Managing Director, Mteto Nyati, set up the conference with an opening speech that delivered a positive and definitive message that Microsoft South Africa and its partners had weathered the recent economic downturn with surprisingly positive results.

The annual awards announcement was a prestigious black tie affair that ensured partners who excelled in delivering Microsoft solutions in specific areas of business received due recognition.

Woolworths Financial Services meets record managements requirements with Datacentrix

Datacentrix has assisted authorised financial services provider, Woolworths Financial Services (WFS), in putting together a comprehensive records management framework by defining and embedding relevant processes and procedures. This is in line with WFS's move from a retail organisation with a credit arm to a fully-fledged financial services company and the associated enhanced compliance requirements.

Around eighteen months ago, Absa Group purchased a 50 percent plus one share interest in WFS, with Woolworths (Pty) Ltd, the retailer, remaining as the other shareholder. Having the controlling stake held by a bank, WFS is now subject to more extensive regulatory and governance requirements.

As identified by the WFS IT Executive, a crucial aspect of the now necessary compliance that needed to be addressed - in terms of legislation as well as an ABSA audit - was records management.

Helene Swart, Account Manager at Datacentrix explains: "Financial services organisations are required to have a rigorous and well defined records management policy in place and to implement and embed the activities needed to conform to these policies. Based on these needs, Datacentrix' Cape Town-based Enterprise Content Management (ECM) business unit was contracted by WFS to investigate the organisation's existing records management practices and recommend processes and procedures in order to achieve compliance to these enhanced governance standards."

WFS specifically required reliable and secure records management practices to be standardised and implemented across the organisation and for policies and procedures to be accessible via the company's intranet. The initial focus was on defining and improving physical records management, including the creation, receipt, storage, retention and security of paper records, with the intention to potentially introduce technology automation in a subsequent phase.

Helene Swart, Account Manager at Datacentrix

"The project, delivered by Datacentrix over five weeks, allowed us to meet all of our objectives as well as all of the records management internal audit items, and is considered a resounding success for both WFS and Datacentrix."

According to Alistair Purvis, Information Security Officer at WFS, the project introduced a new way of working for WFS staff and therefore required the transition to a new culture of record keeping. "This meant that it was critical for Datacentrix to define processes that are sustainable and workable to ensure adoption throughout the business.

"The project, delivered by Datacentrix over five weeks, allowed us to meet all of our objectives as well as all of the records management internal audit items, and is considered a resounding success for both WFS and Datacentrix," he adds.

Datacentrix' ECM division provides consulting services, thought leadership and technology solutions to corporate and government organisations alike, currently employing more than 30 ECM specialists in the Western Cape and a similar number of consultants in the Gauteng region, with a smaller complement in KwaZulu-Natal.

Datacentrix focuses its efforts and resource structures around best-of-breed ECM products including Open Text ECM, Microsoft SharePoint, K2.Net BPM and Mimecast UEM.

Virtualisation gains ground with forward looking companies

The pervasive nature of Information and Communication technology (ICT) continues unabated with virtualisation now coming to the fore as a clean, green, efficient and more secure option for businesses. Tony de Sousa, Enterprise Business Unit Manager at Datacentrix says virtualisation carries a number of significant benefits in terms of data security, management and flexibility.

"What has really kick-started virtualisation is its cost-efficiency and positive impact on the organisation's bottom line. Once users become familiar with the concept, the real benefits become visible and tangible in the form of improved control of data, easier deployment and achievement of regulatory compliance, higher security, reduced support costs and extended device lifecycles."

Security in the mobile compute space is of specific concern to many clients. Client virtualisation can provide an organisation with the peace of mind that should a laptop be lost or stolen the data contained on the device is encrypted and can be destroyed based on policy. Having the added benefit of having the end-user backup and running in a matter of minutes as all data and applications still reside securely within the data centre.

There are also environmental benefits from lower power consumption, which de Sousa says is a strong motivating factor for most of South Africa's corporate organisations.

Typically IT environments today are driven within a broad strategy of workplace transformation and virtualisation is one of a number of elements deployed to provide an effective business infrastructure and architecture for conducting successful business.

De Sousa says business in South Africa has, for some time, been adopting virtual communication technologies

Tony de Sousa, Enterprise Business Unit Manager at Datacentrix

such as remote video, virtual meetings, virtual learning, e-mail, instant messaging and social networking sourced from a wide selection of access devices.

"Virtualisation can be implemented as VDI (virtual desktop infrastructure) or as HVD (hosted virtual desktops), enabling end-users within an organisation to access their data and applications from suitable devices no matter where they are located. Desktop virtualisation, however, needs to be carefully considered and planned with close attention paid to determining appropriate workplace environments and a detailed virtualisation strategy."

A "segmentation audit" of users must be executed upfront as this will determine whether or not their specific needs can be met by virtualisation. Typical segments such as call centres, telesales/support, marketing, trading, development and research need to be evaluated and the personnel within them are usually classified or graded as task, productivity or knowledge workers or performance users.

"It is also important to assemble and examine information about the existing environment, covering the entire IT system and including workstation types, the operating system, the available applications, all devices that may be locally connected, including printers, faxes and other devices such as scanners and their locations," says de Sousa.

There are a number of solution options available and the selection should be based on suitability in terms of

the applications required by the business. "Experience leads one to be wary of bringing in diverse IT equipment suppliers and deployment teams in the setting up and management of the VDI as this can lead to less than perfect configuration and evaluation cycles that take longer than really necessary. It is preferable to have a single line of responsibility and that is the approach that has always been adopted by Datacentrix."

Scaling and sizing of virtual solutions has advanced over the past few years to cater for up to 1,000 users. However, de Sousa says that because the general approach has remained static there can be negative impacts on cost-efficiency.

"Datacentrix has overcome this by ensuring that the virtual architectures we implement for our clients are sourced from an OEM supplier whose design is scaled to thousands of users, not hundreds. Other blade and

storage architectures designed to be modular have also emerged and have been tried and tested with VDI solutions, ensuring that clients can add virtual capacity as their needs expand."

Opportunities for virtualisation are also being created by the looming migration to the new Windows 7 operating system and de Sousa says virtual migration can significantly reduce the cost of doing so compared to traditional operating system migration and complete the exercise in half the time.

"Datacentrix is well positioned and qualified to address the entire spectrum of virtualisation implementation. Our technicians have extensive skills, knowledge and expertise in the three main client virtualisation solutions available in South Africa. This means one partner and a single line of responsibility for companies wanting to go the virtual route."

Datacentrix CFO shines on Women's Day TV

Datacentrix Group Financial Director and Chief Financial Officer, Liz Naidoo, flew the company flag high earlier this year in an interview with Sara Mather of ABN that aired on Women's Day.

Viewers heard that the economy, while still in a slow recovery mode, will start to pick up and that businesses are moving away from a pure technical investment and are beginning to look for offerings that will increase their strategic value and improve their operational efficiencies. As the economy improves, increased spend in technology solutions will be seen.

On the question of Government, Liz pointed out that the Government sector services demand has declined with commitment to spending by departments that are in various stages of progress in their development programmes. Datacentrix is well positioned in this arena.

In addition, telcos are coming into play in the IT sector, but Datacentrix sees this as an opportunity to play a better game. To be positioned to do so requires a heavy investment in relationships, solutions development and value add. At the same time, Datacentrix looks to engage with companies and partners where there is a focus on these elements as well as on service delivery.

The business remains focused on the South African market and sees huge opportunities to engage with companies that have African and global footprints and to expand these relationships.

Furthermore, the 2010 Soccer World Cup had a very positive effect on Datacentrix, which was a formal partner for the event in terms of managed printing solutions and services provision. Liz was pleased to stress that Datacentrix received several accolades for the role that the company had played.