

infocentrix

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

OUR SPONSORS

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- Riverbed
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Datacentrix shows organic revenue growth over interim period

Datacentrix has announced its interim financial results for the six months ended 31 August 2011. The Group showed good organic growth of 9 percent from R836 million to R913 million, a creditable performance in light of the anticipated revenue drop-off following the once-off FIFA World Cup event last year.

Excluding World Cup income, group revenue line grew by 19 percent. Earnings declined from R55 million to R52 million for the six-months.

According to Datacentrix CEO, Ahmed Mahomed, this was as a consequence of increased pressure on transactional business leading to a decline in margins from 9 percent to 8 percent, and a greater investment in key technical competencies. Headline earnings per share (HEPS) decreased accordingly from 27.9 cents to 26.8 cents.

Datacentrix continues to maintain sound financial and operational disciplines across the business, with cash generated from operating activities amounting to R47 million, reflecting a closing cash balance of

R330 million, up from R294 million shown in the 2010 interim results and R321 million at financial year end. The Group has no interest-bearing debt.

The Group continues to invest in skills in new business areas; these costs are being absorbed by the income statement and support the Group's organic growth strategy. Net asset value increased by 9 percent from 214.5 cents to 233.6 cents.

"The Group is satisfied with the overall performance of its divisions, despite negative comparison to last year's windfall profits from the FIFA World Cup event," states Mahomed. "The Infrastructure division contributed 52 percent of group earnings, while the Managed Services and Business Solutions divisions added a healthy 28 percent and 16 percent respectively, with a total contribution of 44 percent of group earnings."

Both the Managed Services and Business Solutions divisions produced solid margins of 12 and 20 percent correspondingly. The Business Solutions division grew divisional earnings by 54 percent, supported by strong performances in the Enterprise Content Management (ECM) and the Business Intelligence (BI) business sectors.

Ahmed Mahomed:
Chief Executive Officer at Datacentrix



"From an Infrastructure division perspective, the nature of the Group's business activities has changed and will continue to do so in order to keep pace of changing industry trends and client expectations," Mahomed explains. "This division, which is the largest within Datacentrix, is migrating from being mainly a transactional commodity player to a solutions provider in the infrastructure segment of the market."

As expected, the Infrastructure division reflected a decline in earnings (18 percent) for the six months post World Cup activities, but revenue for the division grew by a healthy 18 percent.

Datacentrix is recognised as the largest and most broadly certified HP integrator, not only in South Africa, but also the Middle East, Mediterranean and African (MEMA) region, winning this year's awards as HP's service partner of the year for South Africa and runner-up in the MEMA category.

Datacentrix has also attained platinum level partnership status with Symantec, as well as Storage Management and High Availability specialisations, and has strengthened its position with IBM and VMware (where it boasts some of the highest certified virtualisation skills in the country).



Revenue - R913 million



EBITDA - R81 million



HEPS - 26.8 cents

According to Mahomed, the commercial segment of the market continues to be buoyant. "Whilst the Group has seen marginal improvement in the public sector performance, this is still far from pre-downturn levels. Activities in this space continue to be subdued and unpredictable but we will maintain our investment in resources in the sector in order to benefit optimally from IT spend as it arises."

"Datacentrix' Managed Services division had an expected performance decline on the Managed Print Services (MPS) side, following the benefits brought in by this sector following the World Cup," he adds. "The Outsourcing business, however, showed healthy double digit growth for the period."

The Business Solutions division has shown an excellent growth of 54 percent over the period under review, generated in particular by the ECM business unit, which has one of the largest services capabilities in the market and is focused on the ECM, Business Process Management (BPM) and Information Lifecycle Management (ILM) spaces. The BI business unit has also shown good results for the period after a skills injection last year, albeit from a low base.

Mahomed believes that industry consolidation will continue on both a local and global level. "From Datacentrix' perspective, our strategy to grow our total solutions portfolio will continue."

"We finalised the establishment of a Security Operation Centre (SOC), which incorporates leading technologies to address the security needs of our clients on a proactive basis. In addition, we offer a mail cloud solution and are in the process of expanding our cloud offering. As cloud technology matures, the Group will continue to evaluate opportunities closely and will make the necessary investment."

In addition, we believe that wins in the Outsourcing business have substantially strengthened our market positioning. To this end, Datacentrix will continue developing solutions in order to deliver tangible business value to our clients."

The Group has withdrawn the cautionary relating to its BEE shareholding, but continues to explore ways of improving its BEE equity holding. The company has flagged this issue as critical, particularly the challenge it has had in augmenting its black shareholding in line with anticipated ICT Charter requirements.

The board is pleased to declare an interim dividend of 13.4 cents per share, in line with the dividend policy of two times cover on HEPS.



Ahmed Mahomed: Chief Executive Officer at Datacentrix and HP Services Partner of the Year, runner-up for MEMA region

Datacentrix named local HP Services Partner of the Year, runner-up for MEMA region

Datacentrix has been announced as HP's South African Services Partner of the Year. The company was also named as runner-up in the Middle East, Mediterranean and Africa (MEMA) award category.

According to Agashnee Pillay, HP TS channel manager, one of the reasons that Datacentrix garnered the local award was its achievement of the highest total support value for HP in South Africa.

"Following a decade long partnership, Datacentrix is HP's largest services and most certified partner in South Africa and is a company that is highly focused on delivering strategic customer engagements. We believe that this distinguishes them from other local players," Pillay adds. "In addition, HP has an implicit trust in Datacentrix to develop and deliver more compelling service offerings for its customers and this is another differentiating factor."

"It is for these reasons that Datacentrix has been named as local HP Services Partner of the Year, as well as for demonstrating effective HP branded services growth. The company's close collaboration and value proposition to the market gained it the MEMA HP Services Partner runner-up award and we believe that Datacentrix is in a strong position to take the number one spot for MEMA in the 2012 financial year."

Certified as both an HP Authorised Services Partner (ASP) and a Professional Services Partner (PSP), Datacentrix is authorised to perform warranty and contract support on the HP branded products. "Our dedication to our partners and investment in skills has

played a key role in Datacentrix' migration from being mainly a transactional commodity player to a solution- and service-focused provider," explains Ahmed Mahomed, Datacentrix CEO.

"We are pleased to see our focus on HP as a key strategic partner be recognised by these awards and look forward to strengthening our relationship further in the years to come."

Ahmed Mahomed with HP Services Partner of the Year award



AFGRI rolls out SharePoint upgrade with Datacentrix, sees outstanding user buy-in

AFGRI, South Africa's leading listed agricultural services group, has successfully rebuilt and upgraded its Microsoft SharePoint solution from version 2007 to 2010. The project was carried out in conjunction with Datacentrix.

Previously, AFGRI's Animal Feeds business unit used SharePoint for approximately eight years as a quality management system (for ISO and HACCP certification), while the company's intranet was also hosted on SharePoint, but usage was limited to group policies and occasional announcements.

According to Tracy van der Schyff, Quality Systems Manager at AFGRI Animal Feeds, the previous SharePoint installations weren't very stable and the migration from 2003 to 2007 had not been successful. "Based on these factors, we made the decision to rebuild the Animal Feeds solution and intranet from scratch, in order for us to start using SharePoint as a business critical application and management platform, not just a portal."

The timing of the project tied in well with the implementation of the combined AFGRI strategy and philosophy, which addressed the consolidation and streamlining of business processes and also created the opportunity for workflows using technologies like InfoPath and SharePoint.

"Following the initial rollout of the new SharePoint setup, the solution would then be expanded to include the rest of AFGRI. This would give us the opportunity to build both a more stable, user-friendly system as well as to clean up and archive data."

Launched in May this year, the new intranet landing page has a very different look and feel, aiming for more of a "notice board" appearance, which Van der Schyff felt would be more appealing to users. "The result has been fantastic. Users now have a far better understanding of SharePoint and are seeing the potential in it as a tool for everyday use, something that can certainly be attested to by the number of comments and requests received.

"AFGRI's project has seen such great success since we got the formula right by involving both the business and the IT side, so the pains of the user were brought to light and fully understood. Without user buy-in and uptake, investment in technology is wasted.

Thus, it was also with the user in mind that we designed the intranet landing page in a way that is practical but fun, with a funky cartoon character mascot that is also used on communications and training manuals. So many organisations have forgotten how to have fun at work and still be productive and efficient."

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She maintains that many businesses fail with their SharePoint installations because they limit usage to document management instead of utilising it to its full potential.

"SharePoint is the most powerful tool out there for quality management systems and integrating processes," she says. "With 'compliance' becoming the new buzz word, you really can't go wrong with this technology."

The new system has also enabled simpler navigation, taking the approach that business processes, like the specific requirements of the Human Resources department, are laid out in a straightforward format and linked where relevant to necessary documentation. This means that navigation is made far less complicated and more logical.

Furthermore, AFGRI is using SharePoint for incident and innovation management and is seeing a huge amount of value add on this side. "This marks a very exciting

chapter for AFGRI as it is all about helping users at every level - even if they don't use the system directly, they still influence it," Van der Schyff adds.

Currently approximately 500 AFGRI staff members are up and running on the new version of SharePoint, a number that is set to increase to a few thousand in the future.

"Datacentrix was the obvious choice to partner with on this project due to our ongoing relationship and the technical expertise it has onboard and we were very fortunate to work with a knowledgeable, professional team."

Says Reinald Bormann, Datacentrix business development manager: Business Intelligence: "As a Gold Certified Microsoft partner, Datacentrix is in the process of establishing itself as the leading SharePoint partner in South Africa. We truly believe that an implementation like AFGRI's, which required a large amount of custom development, attests to our expertise within this sector and is a feather in the Datacentrix cap."

Datacentrix takes top position as NetApp Partner of the Year 2011

Datacentrix has garnered the title of South African NetApp Partner of the Year for 2011.

According to NetApp South Africa channel manager, Matthew Barker, the award was given to Datacentrix based on the substantial rise in revenue achieved by the company year on year, as well as the acquisition of new accounts, both within the government and retail sectors.

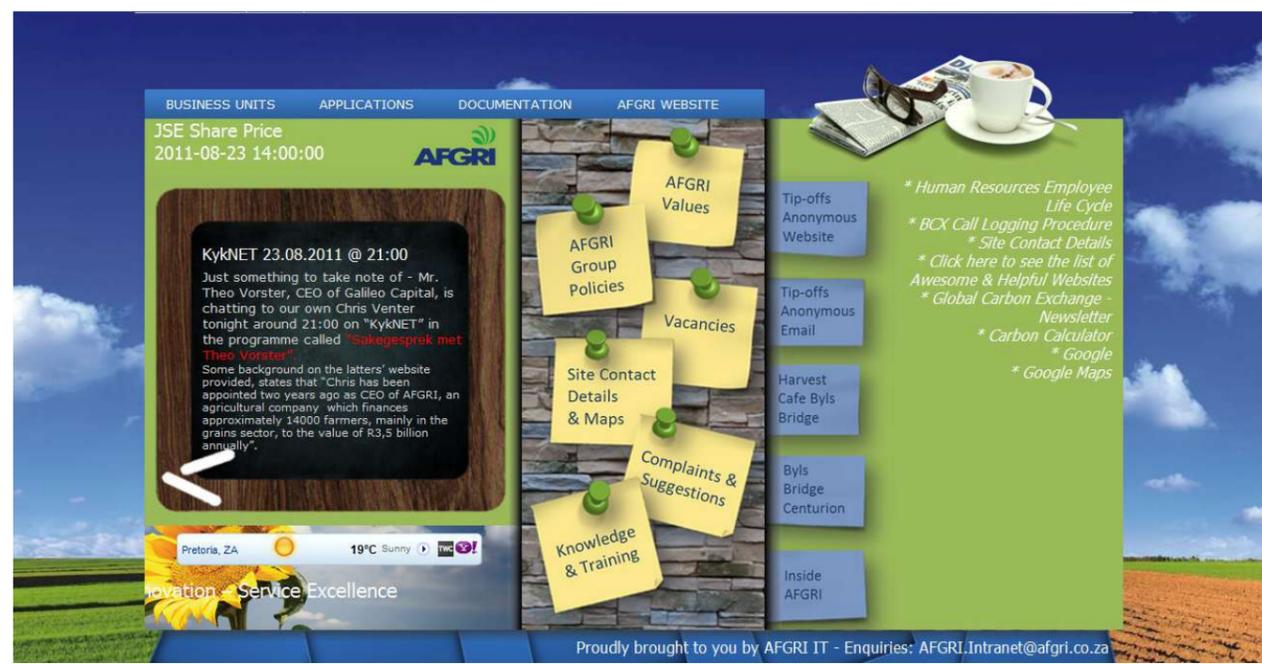
"We have partnered with Datacentrix for around 18 months now and our relationship has grown from strength to strength," he says. "Their level of investment into NetApp and commitment to the brand has been eye opening.

"Within a short time period, they have not only reached Platinum Partner status, but also satisfied our requirements to qualify as both a Profession Service Certified (PSC) Professional Services Partner and Support Services Certified (SSC) Support Services Partner, all of which have stringent requirements that need to be fulfilled."

Barker maintains that Datacentrix has assisted in elevating NetApp to a new level in South Africa through the penetration of new markets. "We are looking forward to continuing success with Datacentrix on a national basis into the future."

"With so many companies focused on the bottom line today, NetApp's storage and data management tools can help lower ROI by assisting them in reducing downtime and improving productivity, without requiring additional overheads," Barker continues. "With NetApp, local businesses will be able to decrease TCO by up to 62 percent, run database copies 97 percent faster than with alternative solutions and slash storage and data management costs for e-mail applications by over 60 percent.

"These types of solutions fit seamlessly into Datacentrix' focus on the data centre level, enabling businesses to operate more efficiently and effectively," he says. "We look forward to continuing and building on our partnership with Datacentrix."



The Department of Transport and Public Works enables faster, more secure access to documents through scanning initiative

As part of the vision of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC) to remove the majority of its physical documentation and paper based files from its processes, the Department of Transport and Public Works has scanned more than 7.4 million pages - equating to more than 37 tons of paper - which have been catalogued, boxed, indexed and uploaded into OpenText Livelink in full text searchable PDF files.

This has saved the Department 186m² of floor space, which would have been required to store all of the content scanned during the project.

"Since its initial implementation in 2006, the Department has been using Livelink to drive its Enterprise Content Management (ECM) campaign and



"This project will reduce the amount of time spent by officials looking for information as well as decreasing operational costs related to paper and photocopying through easier sharing of and collaboration on documents."

has, once again, led the way for the Provincial Government with its latest project to capture, index and store the existing paper content in its offices," says Trish Dicks, strategic account manager ECM: public sector at implementation partner, Datacentrix.

"Datacentrix worked closely with the Department's staff in order to gather the paper documentation, ensured that it remained classified according to the approved provincial archives file plan and then scanned it into Livelink. This initiative created a platform for improved compliance with the archives legislation."

OpenText Livelink had already allowed easier and faster access to electronic documents for the Department, using powerful search capabilities, and provides access to documents by multiple authorised people at the same time.

Furthermore, the scanning initiative introduced Optical Character Recognition (OCR), providing the ability to search .pdf documents, meaning that even scanned documents are now fully searchable. This has significantly increased the Department's efficiency when searching for information, Dicks explains.

"When the scan centre became fully operational, the team scanned an average of 75 thousand pages per day," she adds. "Almost three quarters of this content was not returned to the Department's offices, but was sent to its central archive, thereby freeing up precious office space for use by people rather than paper."

Says Reggie Parker, Director: knowledge management at the Department: "This project will reduce the amount of time spent by officials looking for information as well as decreasing operational costs related to paper and photocopying through easier sharing of and collaboration on documents.

Decision-making and auditor queries are further facilitated through this process, as less time is spent on accessing content. In addition, physical files are now better protected by reducing the movement of critical documents."

Datacentrix launches an EMEA first - the SOC of the future

Datacentrix has launched the first Security Operating Centre (SOC) of its kind within the EMEA region. The state-of-the-art SOC integrates RSA's enVision security information and event management (SIEM) platform with its Archer governance, risk, and compliance (eGRC) suite, allowing for true enterprise security intelligence - the only EMEA SOC to do so thus far.

The solution is protected and safeguarded by FortiNet's FortiGate unified threat management offering.

According to security business unit manager at Datacentrix, Carel van Vuuren, in today's world, information has no boundaries and the effort to protect it has become a huge concern for organisations.

"Information and the systems that host, carry and store it are under constant attack and require best of breed technologies, highly skilled security engineers and round-the-clock monitoring actions to ensure they are protected and available at the right time to the right person."



Carel Janse van Vuuren: ICT Security Solutions Business Unit Manager, Rainer Jeske: Managing Director Technology Solutions and Pierre Jacobs: Chief Security Architect

On the corporate governance side, executives are also being held liable when problems arise and the ever increasing regulatory requirements have resulted in more serious penalties, more assertive regulators and a more informed public.

With the Datacentrix SOC, customers will be protected 24/7/365 by leading technologies, supported by highly skilled security engineers, and this at a fraction of the costs and effort of having it in-house.

"We will basically remove the burden of having skilled security engineers for every possible technology utilised by the organisation. Further to this, the SOC will provide a secure connection for the client to view their security status in real time with a custom-made user friendly dashboard.

"Finally," says Van Vuuren, "we pride ourselves in the fact that our SOC is not just about monitoring, but also about immediate response. In short, when a possible incident is suspected or detected, the SOC team will immediately respond with the best possible preventative action, containing the incident and minimising the risk. To enhance this, our SOC system and team are linked to the world's largest collection of security sampling engines with direct access to a worldwide security network that constantly monitor security related incidents and attack patterns."

The official Datacentrix SOC launch took place on Friday, 19 August 2011 at the Castle in Kyalami, Johannesburg, co-sponsored by RSA and FortiNet.

Datacentrix supports Thandulwazi Maths & Science Academy for future IT

Datacentrix has donated R450,000 to the Thandulwazi Maths & Science Academy, an education programme run by the St Stithians Foundation that was established in 2006 based on the need for effective action in addressing the critical issues pertaining to the teaching of Maths and Science in schools in and around Gauteng.

"It is wonderful to work with a CSI partner like Datacentrix that takes such an active interest in the initiatives of the Thandulwazi Maths & Science Academy and is so committed to providing quality education for all in our country," says Peter Backwell, chair of the St Stithians Foundation. Recognising that an education system is only as good as its teachers, one of the main thrusts of the Thandulwazi programme has been the up-skilling and professional development of teachers currently working in schools in previously disadvantaged areas.

The Thandulwazi-Rokunda Teacher Workshops are held on 11 Saturdays a year and cater for over 600



PJW Backwell: Chairman of Thandulwazi and Rejoice Mamphitha: Head of Human Resources at Datacentrix

educators, teaching in Grades R to 9. Teachers come from schools across the Gauteng province, as well as from as far afield as Limpopo, Mpumalanga, the Northwest and even KwaZulu-Natal.

"Without the wonderful assistance of companies such as Datacentrix these teacher workshops would not be possible. The joy and excitement on teachers' faces when using a computer for the first time or participating in collaborative discussions about coping with large classes or discipline issues at school are a privilege to behold," says Karen Walstra, director of the Thandulwazi-Rokunda Teacher Workshops.

"Thandulwazi is ubuntu in action," says Jeska Mnguni, one of the teachers who has benefitted from the Thandulwazi teachers' programme. Mnguni, a Foundation Phase teacher from Mdelwa Hlongwane Primary School (Soweto), has attended the teacher workshops for the last two years. When describing the impact that Thandulwazi has had on her career, she comments that "Thandulwazi has made me fall in love with teaching all over again. Long may Thandulwazi continue to thrive and help myself and others."

Datacentrix provided essential CSI funding in 2010 and 2011 for the Thandulwazi-Rokunda Teacher Workshop Programme. Backwell notes that "the expansion, impact and reach of the Thandulwazi programme would not have been possible without funding from corporate donors, such as Datacentrix, whose commitment to providing effective professional development and training programmes for the upgrade of teachers is commendable."

Says Rejoice Mamphitha, Head of Human Resources at Datacentrix: "As a technology company, Datacentrix can attest to the fact that quality IT staff is becoming a scarce commodity and we believe that this is largely due to the fact that students are not receiving the solid

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Datacentrix establishes Infrastructure Optimisation Solutions business unit

As part of its drive to strengthen focus on the data centre space, Datacentrix has set up a new business unit that concentrates specifically on the data centre's IT and facilities infrastructure.

"Through our new Infrastructure Optimisation Solutions (iOS) function, Datacentrix delivers a set of methodologies, audits, computational tools and outcomes in order to assist businesses in making the most of their data centres," explains Johann Coetzee, managing director of the Datacentrix Infrastructure division. "This means that we are able to address each element within the data centre, from design and refurbishment to the supply of server and network cabinets, air management systems, control and monitoring solutions, intelligent power meters and data cabling. Using Computational Fluid Dynamics modelling we give airflows in the data centre visibility enabling us to determine remedial actions.

"Efficiency is certainly becoming a data centre buzzword," he continues. "In fact, research company Gartner states that energy-related costs account for approximately 12 percent of overall data centre expenditure and that energy costs are the fastest rising expenditure in this sector."

Through its new iOS business unit, Datacentrix aims to assist organisations to dramatically reduce the costs of data centre power and cooling by between 20 and 50 percent by identifying opportunities to rebalance air delivery, eliminate unnecessary cooling or take back power capacity.

"At the same time, we will help increase data centre life cycles by delaying or eliminating the need for new rack space and data centre build-outs, identify cooling and power inconsistencies at rack level, gain a better understanding of power and cooling usage - what is



Johann Coetzee: Managing Director of Datacentrix Infrastructure

being used, where it is going and how much it costs - and deliver enhanced day-to-day service by improving data centre efficiency, reliability, and uptime."

The new business unit will also help organisations to make informed decisions on where to deploy new application servers on a timely basis and optimise for power, cooling and space constraints.

Says Coetzee: "In South Africa especially, with our spiralling power costs, it is clear that improved control and management within the data centre is critical and something that will affect companies across all industries. We believe that Datacentrix is ideally placed to assist businesses in operating more efficiently and effectively at this level."

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foundation in Maths and Science at school that is needed to enter this sector, and one of the problems of national significance is that of improving basic education conditions for all South Africans.

"The Thandulwazi Academy is doing a fantastic job in addressing this issue and we have firmly put our support behind the good work that is being done by them."

Datacentrix CEO Ahmed Mahomed states that the organisation has an appreciation for the role that business needs to play in the upliftment of communities in South Africa.

"Datacentrix' strategy has always been to focus its spend largely on education. The impact of this strategy is far reaching and has a multiplier effect as it touches not only the lives of individuals directly but also the larger communities in which these individuals operate."



Department of Roads and Public Works: Eastern Cape rolls out successful head count project with Datacentrix

Following its recent merger with Roads from the Department of Roads and Transport, the Department of Roads and Transport, the Department of Public Works in the Eastern Cape needed to undertake an employee head count in order to compile a reconciled, verified database of its payroll system to ensure rightful salary payments and prevent wastage in terms of paying salaries to non-existent staff. The project was completed successfully with the assistance of Datacentrix within a phenomenal nine working days.

“Over 5,000 employees were counted in a span of nine working days, at 23 locations spread across the Eastern Cape. The actual physical head count was backed by digital means through a biometric process that ensured that the count was verifiable and the data was non-redundant and integrated,” explains Mohan Balaga, regional manager at Datacentrix.

Originally, the Department considered undertaking the head count using the standard method of issuing cheques and requiring employees to physically collect them within the same month. The issuing of cheques to over 5,500 staff, however, brought with it a number of complications. Not only was additional security (SAPS protection) required, but arrangements with National Treasury for the method of payment to be changed from electronic to manual had to be made. An order for a batch of cheques had to be submitted to Provincial Treasury and, the various financial institutions needed to be informed that employees would cash cheques or deposit their salaries by means of cheque, allowing the standard cash release date of 14 days to be waived, and so on.

“Fortunately though, the digital verification of each employee using a biometric process meant that no employee details could be duplicated on the system, thus eliminating any scope for errors or identity theft,” says Balaga. “Since each employee would be uniquely identified and physically verified, it was decided that there was no need to use the cheque payment method.”

The counting project took place at 23 counting stations and was carried out by Datacentrix, in conjunction with regional coordinators. These coordinators were given preliminary training by Datacentrix on the equipment prior to the project kick off, with full training completed



Mohan Balaga: Regional Manager at Datacentrix

afterwards. Part of the agreement included retention of the equipment by the Department after the head count was over, in order to electronically register all new employees hired after the project. All registered employees' information is contained on a dedicated server, also provided by Datacentrix.

A significant feature of the Datacentrix service offering was the engagement of an independent audit firm, Gobodo Incorporated, which would audit both the project and the processes. This ensured integrity of the project and its processes while dealing with the sensitive issue of employee information and helped provide the much-needed independent veracity of the outcomes for the client. A project steering committee meeting was held at the end of each day during those two weeks where successes and problems were analysed.

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ISA signs agreement with Datacentrix as a reseller of OSPI® and data centre data collection services

Information Systems Associates (ISA), a company focused on Data Center Infrastructure Management (DCIM), data centre data collection, and mobile data centre management has announced that it has signed an Exclusive OSPI® Software Reseller and Implementation Services Agreement for the Republic of South Africa with Datacentrix. Under terms of the agreement, Datacentrix will offer ISA's OSPI® software, implementation services, and data centre data collection services to its clients.

Joe Coschera, chief executive officer at Information Systems Associates, stated, "This agreement strengthens ISA's commitment to establishing global partnerships with industry leaders whose clients can directly benefit from ISA's deep understanding of the data centre infrastructure management systems. We are most excited having a respected firm such as Datacentrix offering the OSPI® software system and services to its clients in South Africa. ISA has assigned resources in support of the Datacentrix relationship and we look forward to working closely with their team."

“The data centre space is a critical focus area for Datacentrix currently and into the future,” said Johann Coetzee, managing director of Datacentrix' Infrastructure division. “We believe that gaining local market share within this area is a certainty through our association with ISA as a leading provider of data centre and facilities management solutions with a reputation for providing state of the art solutions and services. We look forward to the partnership going from strength to strength.”

About Information Systems Associates

Information Systems Associates (ISA) is a leading provider of data centre and facilities management solutions and is based in Stuart, FL. ISA offers data collection services for the data centre and the On Site Physical Inventory® OSPI® v3 System. The OSPI® v3 System is a mobile data centre asset management product, putting a data centre management solution in the hand of the data centre manager. The OSPI® v3 System is based on ISA's patented data centre asset inventory technology. For more information visit: <http://www.isa-inc.net>

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“Datacentrix was provided with the details of 5,570 employees,” he adds. “Of this number, a total of 5,062 employees were counted successfully during the project.”

The data from the head count project includes scans of the fingerprints of four fingers, each employee's identity document, a digital photo, and certain PERSAL data. The server is updated with the new data on a quarterly basis.

“It should be noted that the Auditor General team conducting the audit of the 2010/2011 financial year has accepted the scanned copies of employees' information from regions other than the head office as part of their verification of personnel audit, which greatly saves the Department in respect of travelling and administration costs.”

“With all information stored on the server now verified, we have been able to eliminate any 'ghost' employees from the system, resulting in sizeable savings to the Treasury,” states Johan van Eck, manager: salary administration at the Department of Roads and Public Works.

“Not only this, but future savings will be realised as the Department now has the equipment to conduct further head count exercises by itself, negating the need to enlist the assistance of a service provider.”

According to Van Eck, Datacentrix' experience and solid track record in head count projects was highlighted by the ease and speed with which this project was completed. “Datacentrix certainly completed our head count project with the greatest level of professionalism and the ongoing technical support and equipment maintenance received from them has added great value to our experience,” he adds.

Leading South African office services company selects Riverbed to optimise bandwidth

Riverbed Technology, the IT infrastructure performance company for networks, applications and storage, has announced that Waltons has successfully deployed 50 Riverbed Steelhead appliances at locations throughout South Africa in order to optimise bandwidth and improve ERP transaction time.

Laurence Slotow, national IT manager at Waltons says: "Our ERP system relies heavily on the wide area network (WAN). Thanks to Riverbed we've managed to avoid a costly bandwidth upgrade and at the same time we are now able to access systems that were previously unusable. Riverbed has fundamentally changed the way we view our data and systems."

"The use of the Riverbed appliances has provided us with numerous benefits," adds Bütha van der Merwe, national network manager at Waltons: "These include boosting our network performance and enhancing our end user experience while saving the company money. We, like many other local companies, have been forced to build distributed network solutions because of the high cost and low availability of bandwidth in South Africa. Riverbed has now enabled us to change our mindset completely and we have already started numerous other consolidation projects that will have an even bigger saving on our IT costs in the long run."

Waltons is a member of the Bidvest Group and is South Africa's largest stationery and office equipment company with 100 branch stores and seven regional offices located across South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique. Each regional office supports between 10 to 35 stores all requiring access to the company's ERP system.

riverbed
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Christo Briedenhann: Regional Sales Manager, Riverbed Africa

The company outsources to a service provider who provides internet services from its data centre located in Cape Town. Users at the regional offices and stores were experiencing severe delays when accessing internet applications, including the ERP system, via the WAN.

The company identified that to overcome the problem it would need to upgrade bandwidth for many of the Telkom data lines in use, which would be a costly exercise.

Pieter Bekker, account executive at Datacentrix, a certified Riverbed reseller, explains, "Waltons knew they had to overcome the issue of remote users taking too long to access critical applications, but wanted to find an alternative to increasing bandwidth costs. We suggested they consider a WAN optimisation solution from Riverbed."

Waltons decided to run a "proof of concept" project and installed Steelhead appliances at four of the regional offices. "The results were immediate," says Bekker, "users noticed a dramatic increase in performance."

After a successful trial, Waltons decided to deploy Steelhead appliances at every regional office. In the third phase, the company installed Steelhead appliances at most store locations in South Africa.

As a future project Waltons is looking at how it can consolidate data and remove servers from the regional offices.

Partnership with VMware brings business value

Datacentrix prides itself on the world class services it delivers to clients; service that is backed up not only with top level solutions, but supported through first class partnerships.

Datacentrix' global relationships with its technology partners remain critical to the company's success, forming part of its business value chain. The organisation boasts a competitive and attractive pricing model as a result of direct purchases from its global technology partners and is accredited by its vendors at the highest possible level, both from a technical and a sales perspective.

This is especially true of the partnership that Datacentrix enjoys with VMware, the world's premier virtualisation and cloud solution provider.

"The world's largest companies use VMware solutions to simplify their IT, fully leverage their existing technology investments and respond faster to changing business demands," says Ian Yates, enterprise technical sales consultant at Datacentrix. "VMware helps us to bring measureable business value to our clients, and our longstanding relationship with the company gives us the tools to effectively deploy and support virtualisation technology in any enterprise capacity."

He adds that Datacentrix only partners with organisations that are leaders within their respective fields to ensure that its clients are served with only the best technology. The partnership with VMware met all of the company's criteria in this regard and Datacentrix has been a VMware partner since 2004, currently holding Premier Partner status.

According to Yates, Datacentrix' commitment to VMware has seen the company make a serious investment in the certification of its staff. "We are extremely proud that we can boast of having one of only two Africans with a VMware Certified Design Expert (VCDX) certification and this constitutes one of only 52 people globally."

VCDX certified technicians are part of an elite group of architects leading virtualisation implementations around the world, having achieved this certification by building on their VMware Certified Professional (VCP) qualification. Each expert has then taken the extra steps of passing both the Enterprise Administration exam and

the Design exam, as well as successfully defending a VMware infrastructure design and implementation plan.

Approximately 80 percent of Datacentrix' account management team are sales specialists in their particular areas of expertise, with a VMware-specific certified team numbering more than 50 people. These include dedicated pre- and post-sales personnel.

"The value that Datacentrix places on its partnership with VMware is evident in the additional investment the company has made in supplementary certifications. Its post implementation support staff members all hold certifications from major hardware vendors, allowing these professionals to provide comprehensive support for clients.

"We have ensured that one resource has the ability to look at a VMware environment and the underlying infrastructure and pinpoint any trouble spots, without having to wait to solve the client's problem. We have invested heavily in the teams that provide services and support to ensure that we are meeting best practice requirements, and that we can provide proactive assistance for our clients."

It makes sense then, that Datacentrix receives multiple partner awards each year, with its expertise that continuously sees client technology requirements satisfied through best-in-class solutions. In the case of VMware, the company has won OEM Partner of the Year for two consecutive years (2010 and 2011), as well as the Sales Engagement award in 2011 and was named Engagement Partner of the Year in 2009.

Yates says that the investment made by Datacentrix in VMware is paying off for the company. "We spent a lot of time building our client base and are seeing opportunities to grow the VMware solution set within this base, not just with new clients. We are constantly striving to improve our offering to clients and, by continuing to invest in VMware, we are presenting them with additional technology to expand their infrastructures."

He adds that because so much of the company's offering is based on an outsourced and services-oriented approach, another area where Datacentrix and VMware are aligned is in the move to the private cloud. "We have a core team of business development personnel looking at the best solutions from a cloud perspective, creating a model that we can take to clients. Obviously, a huge area within this is VMware-focused and our strong relationship with the virtualisation specialist will enhance any cloud solution offered within Datacentrix' own outsourcing and services capabilities."

Data explosion - driving the need for better backup and deduplication



Grant Van Eck

By Grant Van Eck, Datacentrix Account Manager, Symantec

We all know that information is the fundamental connecting fiber of any business. So seeing the unprecedented rates at which data is set to grow is a real eye-opener. Industry analysts predict that stored information will grow 650 percent over the next five years, 85 percent of which will be unstructured data. With this "data explosion" as we like to call it we see some very pressing issues for organisations: storage capacity is not keeping up, therefore existing IT budgets can't hold the data being generated, and in turn some serious backup and recovery challenges emerge.

The solution: data needs to be backed up and deduplicated, and that is becoming increasingly expensive and time-consuming with traditional solutions. Even with the rise of storage consolidation strategies, higher capacities in storage media, and technologies such as storage virtualisation, businesses are spending a higher percentage of their IT budget on acquiring and managing storage resources.

At the same time, the complexity of data backup continues to escalate. The massive influx of data from multiple sources has resulted in the implementation of piecemeal backup and deduplication solutions from multiple vendors. In addition, managing virtual machine (VM) backups adds a new layer of complexity and cost. And older backup technologies, such as tape, often consume excessive bandwidth on the company's local and wide area networks.

"Business Intelligence, who maintains that BI has evolved to become more of a forward-looking technology focused on boosting business growth, rather than just the creation of reports."

Perhaps even more serious, the high cost of data backup and replication sometimes forces IT to cut corners to execute the company's overall disaster recovery strategy, which in turn increases the risk of a catastrophic loss of data and raises potential compliance, regulatory, and even liability issues. Clearly a better approach is needed. These challenges directly impact business strategy, IT productivity, and overall financial results for the enterprise.

To this end, the appliance model has gained traction because of its simplicity and while every business has its own unique set of requirements; productivity, performance, flexibility and cost effectiveness are the key attributes to consider when choosing an appliance model.

Symantec's NetBackup appliances offer simplicity through preinstalled components that can run immediately to optimise performance and is an all-in-one solution so there is no need to integrate with other products. Both source and target deduplication options are provided through one integrated solution offering flexibility in how deduplication is implemented.

The appliances also feature extremely high backup performance via unique multi-dimensional scalability, and performance can be scaled to run tens of thousands of backup jobs per day. The NetBackup appliances are fully compliant with all major operating systems and applications natively, so they can accommodate multiple data types and sources.

One key factor is that the NetBackup appliances deliver strategic cost advantages: better backup service levels

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Datacentrix achieves Symantec Platinum Partner status

Datacentrix has announced that it has attained the highest level within Symantec's Partner Programme, recently being named as a Platinum Partner. The company is also the first partner in South Africa to achieve Symantec Specialisations in both Storage Management and High Availability.

"As a Platinum Partner, Datacentrix has demonstrated both the ability to deliver value to its customers and expertise across multiple Symantec solution sets, consistently achieving revenue targets and attaining a high level of customer satisfaction," says Chad Cleevely, channel manager at Symantec South Africa.

As part of its enhanced partner programme, Symantec has put a greater focus on the core skills, capabilities and competencies that channel partners achieve and maintain across its solutions and services offering.

Specialisations were designed to recognise partners' investment in Symantec and reward their expertise in specific areas. Specialised partners have demonstrated a deep investment in Symantec and an expertise in delivering solutions and services that protect customers' most critical information.

According to Datacentrix CEO, Ahmed Mahomed, Datacentrix' recent Symantec achievements reinforce not only the organisation's ongoing commitment to attaining the very highest levels of partner accreditation, but also its dedication to increasing its focus on the security, data management and systems availability space into the future. "This market has been



Chad Cleevely: Channel Manager at Symantec South Africa

a significant growth area of ours for the past few years and Datacentrix is committed to becoming even further entrenched in this space in order to meet the requirements of South African business," he states.

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result in less data loss; reliability improves as there is no longer any need to cut corners on the disaster recovery strategy; and the appliances improve the organisation's ability to meet SLA's. In addition, implementation can deliver immediate CapEx savings by allowing the customer to consolidate backup and deduplication solutions into one platform and delay or avoid additional hardware purchases.

The appliances also deliver both immediate and long-term OpEx savings by unburdening administrators via centralised management. Moreover, the front-end, capacity-based licensing model (buy it once, use it forever)

for the software portion of the appliance significantly reduces the total cost of ownership as compared to other hardware-based deduplication solutions.

Symantec is firmly committed to continuing to lead this segment and meet customer needs by offering new delivery models and product features. In addition, Symantec along with Platinum Partner Datacentrix, one of our largest partners in the Storage and Availability Sector, are deeply committed to providing outstanding service and support for NetBackup appliances. The platform will continue to evolve and grow in the years ahead to meet the growth in data explosion and help businesses.

Next generation BI transforms business through social knowledge sharing

After years of slow, small changes in how Business Intelligence (BI) is used and perceived, there has been a resurgence in the way that this type of technology is utilised within organisations. The introduction of "BI 3.0", dubbed as the next generation of BI solutions, embraces the approach of social media, allowing businesses to leverage the power of collective intelligence to drive BI velocity and enable better decisions to be made in less time.

So says Reinald Bormann, Datacentrix business development manager: Business Intelligence, who maintains that BI has evolved to become more of a forward-looking technology focused on boosting business growth, rather than just the creation of reports.

"While the first wave of BI solutions was touted as being technology that would revolutionise the way that people work, this promise was never realised," he says. "BI essentially became too complicated for the average business user and was something used primarily by analysts to generate and publish reports.

"Looking at how technology has changed over the years, it is clear that not only has it become far more user friendly, it is highly social, user oriented and rapidly evolving and also arms us with information with which to live our lives," Bormann explains. "For instance, Amazon tells us what to read, iTunes makes recommendations on what music we should be listening to, Facebook keeps us in touch with our friends and LinkedIn allows us to investigate future employers and keep our business contacts in order.

"It makes sense then that the new evolution of BI harnesses these technologies to make itself better, faster and stronger."

"Business Intelligence, who maintains that BI has evolved to become more of a forward-looking technology focused on boosting business growth, rather than just the creation of reports."



Reinald Bormann: Datacentrix Business Development Manager - Business Intelligence

BI 3.0 is based on five main technologies:

A new approach to data modelling: The ability to absorb data on-the-fly through in-memory technologies allows companies to continue examining new data, or observe old data in new ways, without needing to pre-define how it is going to be analysed.

BI 3.0 is for business users: BI 3.0 needs to be easy to use and understand in order to be "owned" by the users that are responsible for the continuous effort to improve a business. It also needs to allow users to make it fit their own specific needs.

BI everywhere: BI is a critical component in the contribution to a business' success. It therefore needs to be available to users wherever they are and whenever they need it, much like e-mail access.

Relevant intelligence: The basis of BI 3.0 is providing the right information at the right time, enabling users to find insight they were not aware they were looking for.

Social BI: Teamwork allows people to accomplish more than one person could. BI 3.0 operates on the same premise, enabling users to work together using social tools to gain a much higher level of insight.

"There are already tools available that can provide entrance into this new world of BI," says Bormann. "One such example is Panorama's recently launched Necto offering that is gaining in popularity. It is truly exciting to see the next iteration of BI already being utilised to enable users to leverage collective intelligence, achieve higher insight and take advantage of 'self-service' type technology to meet business goals."

The desktop is dead

By Pierre du Plessis, Datacentrix next generation services advisor

Public, private and hybrid clouds, software as a service, business service management, application streaming, virtualisation, virtual desktop infrastructure, automated provisioning and service catalogue – not only is the hype deafening, but the list of acronyms and buzzwords is growing by the day.

Now add smartphones, which for the first time in history have shipped more units than desktops, laptops and thin clients combined this year, as well as tablets, like the Apple iPad, Samsung Galaxy and RIM's Blackberry Playbook, to the mix, and you will soon realise why the title is relevant.

But, do enterprises really realise what the impact of this is? Many users walk around with smartphones, tablets and laptops, all connected to enterprise back office systems, which means that Active Directory, Exchange and the internet proxy server all work three times harder.

Pierre du Plessis: Datacentrix next generation services advisor



They also consume more bandwidth, support (well not really, as power users tend to help themselves) and other scarce enterprise resources. So, the question companies need to ask themselves is, did we factor all of this in when cloud and device mobility was sold to us?

So, what does this mean to us mere mortals who consume enterprise applications and services on our traditional 7-9K desktops and 15K laptops? The golden age of power at the fingertips of the distributed end user device is gone. Why do we need super-fast processors, lots of RAM, our own little quagmire of operating system, anti-virus, productivity software and a plethora of utilities like Adobe's Acrobat reader – all which have to be installed, patched, managed and more importantly, paid for?

Virtualisation, automated provisioning and cloud services tenets dictate that most of the applications consumed can be delivered via a browser to a thin client device, obviating 99 percent of the issues described above, and at a much lower cost.

For the mobile warriors who lug laptops around, the tablet will truly revolutionise their habits and behaviour. And, although the enterprises resisted adoption of iPads, users sneaked them in because they could easily set up and configure their own devices without the help of the IT department. A rich application store, from which users elect what they want to buy and pay for themselves is the paradigm shifter.

And who should be blamed for the wasted investment in an i7 dual quad core CPU, 4GB of DDR3 RAM, 2TB of storage and a chassis that consumes 450W of power, hooked up to a 24" LCD monitor, wireless keyboard and a laser mouse that lurks around on many desks?

Certain hardware and software suppliers that seldom release updates to major chipsets, processor standards or operating systems. It all just gets too complex, like a big engine with hundreds of cogs that have to mesh before I can fully utilise my desktop.

Smartphones and tablets will destroy the current market domination of some of the larger hardware and software providers. Not only are their developers Gen X and Y, and whatever comes after that, they also release new processors and operating systems every three to six months. They open their operating systems to millions of developers who further enhance their product (Apple & Google Android are great examples).

Enterprises in turn will increasingly adopt thin client virtual desktop infrastructure, with applications hosted and managed centrally, and only a browser as the interface that has to be maintained. And this all at a price point that could be as much as 70 percent less per user. That is IT budget liberated, green and enterprise bottom line added for very little effort.