

Hollywoodbets wins private cloud infrastructure solution jackpot

International sports betting operator Hollywoodbets has successfully consolidated multiple platforms and technologies across its production and development environments, with the roll-out of a single, high performance, scalable storage and server platform.

Touted to be one of the largest private cloud infrastructure implementations in KwaZulu-Natal, the project was completed by hybrid IT systems integrator and managed services provider, Datacentrix.

Hollywoodbets is the largest online sports betting operator in South Africa and a top contender on the world's gaming stage. The primarily online company operates in South Africa, Mozambique, Ireland and the United Kingdom, with 92 stores across South Africa. Hollywoodbets offers betting on horse racing, soccer, cricket, rugby, tennis, motorsport and more. The operator also has a wide range of betting options on virtual games, casino-type slots and table games, live games, scratch cards, as well as lottery draws.

Michael Collins, General Manager at BET Software, says: "BET Software, Hollywoodbets' provider of cutting-edge betting platforms, needed to double the capacity of its existing storage systems and to extend the maintenance and support by a further 24 months.

"Multiple vendors provided the storage infrastructure, of which some warranties had expired and others were about to lapse. Hollywoodbets faced several other challenges in managing performance and balancing capacity across these technologies, with limited real-time statistics and dashboards.

"In addition, the cost of maintenance was high; upgrades required downtime with additional



Michael Collins, General Manager at BET Software

business risk and loss of income. There was also a need for greater flexibility and agility to support growth and to deploy new systems and solutions with higher performance."

Solutions put forward

Datacentrix, having a mature engagement with BET Software, performed a detailed assessment of the existing environment to understand the complexity of the platforms accessed by the various applications and systems. Furthermore, the Datacentrix team wanted to ensure that any suggested upgrades would not only support the required capacity, but also increase performance as Hollywoodbets expands its storage footprint.

Two scenarios were proposed by Datacentrix to Hollywoodbets; the first being to continue as is, with a view to doubling the capacity and extending the maintenance, while the existing systems would preserve the organisation's current persona and limitations. The second option was the Infinidat Infinibox enterprise storage system.



“The potential benefits that could be realised by using the Infinidat offering were significant, including inter alia:

- A 20% cost reduction over three years, consolidation of the various storage platforms onto a single system, thereby greatly reducing operational and management overheads;
- An investment in next-generation AI-driven technology that would continuously learn and self-optimize as Hollywoodbets grows;
- Potentially increased performance and reduced latency across all systems, especially on the geographical cluster; and
- Access to detailed, real-time dashboards and reporting, proactively providing information as and when required, and reducing time on analytics.

The Infinibox solution could also provide for a capacity expansion of 250% within the same price point, and would deliver a seven ‘nines’ high availability platform, as opposed to its existing five nines solution, which is critical for a real-time online sports betting business.

“Finally, Infinidat’s unique commercial model would mean no downtime or physical upgrades for future capacity expansion requirements, and a fixed commercial model for expansion.”

Based on Datacentrix’s recommendations, BET Software then carried out an independent comparison to other solutions in the market, and found that the Infinidat option offered better availability, higher capacity, reduced TCO and on average was 40% to 50% more cost-effective upfront than comparative offerings.

“A few weeks prior to discussing the storage requirement with Datacentrix, we had briefly mentioned that Hollywoodbets was considering deploying a third datacentre as an enabler to disaster recovery (DR). Datacentrix demonstrated, as part of the proposal, how our existing investments could be rearchitected and deployed into the third DR facility with very little additional investment. Datacentrix provided the architecture and deployment service as part of the new storage investment, thereby adding great value to Hollywoodbets.”

Says Peter Spies, Solutions Manager: KwaZulu-Natal Commercial at Datacentrix: “The Infinibox storage solution was critical to the win and a major solution differentiator with its attractive pricing, innovative financial



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modelling and neural cache technology that sees system performance optimised and improved year on year (unlike other technologies that typically slow down and develop bottlenecks over time). Infinibox delivers faster than all-flash performance and provides hyperscale capacity and bulletproof reliability.

“Datacentrix also recommended high-end servers designed to run Hollywoodbets’ demanding, mission-critical applications and databases, ensuring performance and availability.”

The project continues, despite COVID

Datacentrix was able to complete the environment assessments just prior to the initial COVID-19 lockdown, in February 2020, proposing the initial solution a few weeks later.

Engagement between the teams continued into lockdown, and the order was formally placed by Hollywoodbets in June 2020, with Infinidat’s commitment to a two-week delivery, despite many local and global lockdown restrictions still being in place.

The actual implementation and ability to go live on the new Infinidat platform was completed within 96 hours, followed by a 60-day testing and validation process.

By September, all production systems had been migrated onto the new platform. Hollywoodbets also took this opportunity to leverage the many benefits the new platform brought to optimise, migrate and consolidate their systems.



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Once the old equipment was freed up, the third site DR build began and was completed in February 2021.

Reconfigurations and optimisation to some of the LAN switching and inter-site L2 links were completed by the middle of March 2021, which signalled the end of the project.

Betting on the new platform

“Datacentrix was able to triple the number of data warehouses running on the new Hollywoodbets high-performance, scalable platform with zero impact to users, customers or performance,” Spies states. “The system currently delivers around 5,000 bets per second (18 million bets per hour) with a catalogue of between 22,000 and 23,000 items available on which users are able to bet.”

Collins says: “From a commercial perspective, our cost per gigabyte of storage has halved, while performance has increased. Being an online real-time transaction business, system performance and online user experience is imperative. When there are events that impact on user experience, having access to immediate data and performance analysis is critical. Our new solution delivers on this.

“Less time is spent managing and optimising our storage systems and the AI technology takes care of optimisations. In the immediate nature of Hollywoodbets’ business, having AI technology that can predict and respond faster than any human has been significant and seamless.

“We have been able to increase workloads by a factor of two since deploying the Infinidat

solution, without any impact on business, and have also been able to leverage the advanced tools inherent in the Infinidat system to recover from application issues in a matter of seconds.

“Datacentrix, together with Infinidat, provides us with regular service review meetings, again reducing the time and effort spent keeping things running, and allowing Hollywoodbets to focus on our core business.”

According to Collins, the Datacentrix Infinidat solution is set to demonstrate significant benefits into the future, such as:

- Less capital expenditure required for future capacity growth by leveraging the included pay-as-you-grow model;
- No downtime for future expansions, as a 100% capacity growth is already included with zero investment from Hollywoodbets; and
- The integrated AI technology means that the system will continue to self-heal and self-optimize, resulting in it being faster tomorrow than it was today.

“The team from Datacentrix has a long history of engaging with BET Software,” he continues. “We like the fact that the company doesn’t just give us what we ask for; Datacentrix invests the time and effort to look outside the box to see if there is a better solution that will add more value to Hollywoodbets, not just in price, but in how we conduct our business.

“Datacentrix’s engagement is very much a ‘client-first’ model, and the organisation retains the top people and technical skills, who make themselves available to BET Software 24x7 to ensure our success,” Collins concludes.