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ON ITS WAY

An expert explains how South Africa is becoming a cloud-first market

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SPOTLIGHT ON RWANDA

Exploring some of the digital projects under way in Rwanda

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RETAIL TECH TRENDS

Seven technology strategies that will unlock growth in the retail sector

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

DNI, an investment company in the telecommunications and distribution sectors, has increased capacity and enhanced performance in its Johannesburg-based server room, which has been revamped.

Case study

Planning for future ICT capacity

DNI, an investment company in the telecommunications and distribution sectors, has had its Johannesburg-based server room revamped thanks to Datacentrix, meaning that current capacity and performance-related challenges have been overcome.



Christian Jacobs, Head of IT at DNI



DNI began as a procurement business in 2006, offering cost reduction and supply chain optimisation solutions to large corporations. Four years later, the company set off to specialise in distribution and retail for the telecommunications industry and its investment strategy revolves around owning the route to market and customer acquisition at the retail point of purchase.

Currently, DNI's competitive advantage rests in its national reach and retail footprint throughout South Africa, as well as building close connections with very big partners such as Cell C, Telkom, Huawei and Edcon.

However, its infrastructure needed an urgent upgrade due to it frequently freezing,

meaning that users could not access the network or storage.

Not only that, but due to the DNI's recent growth, the company's ICT infrastructure needed to support more employees with a view to expand further in the future.

"Our most important requirements were availability, as well as added capacity to cater for the speed at which DNI is expanding," said Christiaan Jacobs, Head of IT at DNI.

DNI was seeking recommendations on best-of-breed products that would be a good fit for its business and infrastructure requirements, in addition to best practice advice. Running a fairly lean IT division, the company also wanted to build in a level of automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) for improved, proactive infrastructure management.

"Based on these requirements, Datacentrix rolled out a hyperconverged, software-defined solution catering for DNI's requirements for self-management and optimisation," said Jacobs.

"The solution combines storage, network and computer equipment into one chassis, along with built-in management software.

"This includes an all-flash storage array, with Artificial Intelligence capabilities that cannot only monitor the underlying storage arrays, but also the adjacent data centre

effectiveness, but also the organisation's skills and expertise, which were an important checkpoint in this tender process," explained Jacobs.

"Having established a relationship with Datacentrix in my previous role, I was also aware of the team's reliability and execution abilities, and its commitment to understanding customer environments and specific requirements.

"I worked with Datacentrix to implement a major network and wireless rollout. My experience with Datacentrix – both then and now – has been that the organisation offers sound advice, has excellent expertise and actually listens to clients' specific requirements. It is difficult to find this level of trust when it comes to meeting the deliverables."

Since the ICT company's appointment, Datacentrix has positioned itself as a trusted advisor to DNI, having successfully implemented the new environment, which includes servers, networking equipment, rack enclosures and connectivity.

"In addition, Datacentrix rolled out a storage solution that not only caters for our growth over time, but makes provision for DNI's in-house development programme, which requires a great deal of space," added Jacobs. "Our previous system just couldn't handle the related queries and loads, meaning that they had to be run overnight. Today, these can be resolved in a matter of minutes, at any time of day."

The new infrastructure also has a much smaller footprint, leaving physical space for expansion over time, and is fully redundant.

"We now have in place the proactive management structure and it was here that Datacentrix' certification levels were critical," said Jacobs. "I'm pleased to advise that there has been no downtime since the rollout – even during migration, where our users were live on the system. It was a seamless process with no disruption at all; in fact, the only feedback from our staff was around the improved performance of the new infrastructure."

These gains have been particularly prevalent within the new storage environment – with huge space savings.

THE SOLUTION COMBINES STORAGE, NETWORK AND COMPUTER EQUIPMENT INTO ONE CHASSIS, ALONG WITH BUILT-IN MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE.

technology. In addition, DNI wanted to automate its directory service, for automatic user account creation and de-provisioning (based on non-activity), to save on these repetitive, time-consuming tasks.

"Datacentrix' submission was accepted in March 2019, not solely based on cost



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“According to our virtual server, we are currently running at 30TB of data, but after deduplication and compression this has been scaled right down to 4.5TB,” said Jacobs. “Our speed has also doubled, which has meant that we’re simply not seeing the noticeable usage spikes that we did previously. In the old environment, the kit was operating at maximum capacity and heavy usage – such as the BI team running reports during the day – would slow down the entire production department.”

The modularity of the new equipment has effectively future-proofed DNI’s ICT

environment for at least the next five years. Jacobs added: “Now, we are able to expand blade by blade and chassis by chassis – up to six times our current capacity – as our requirements grow.

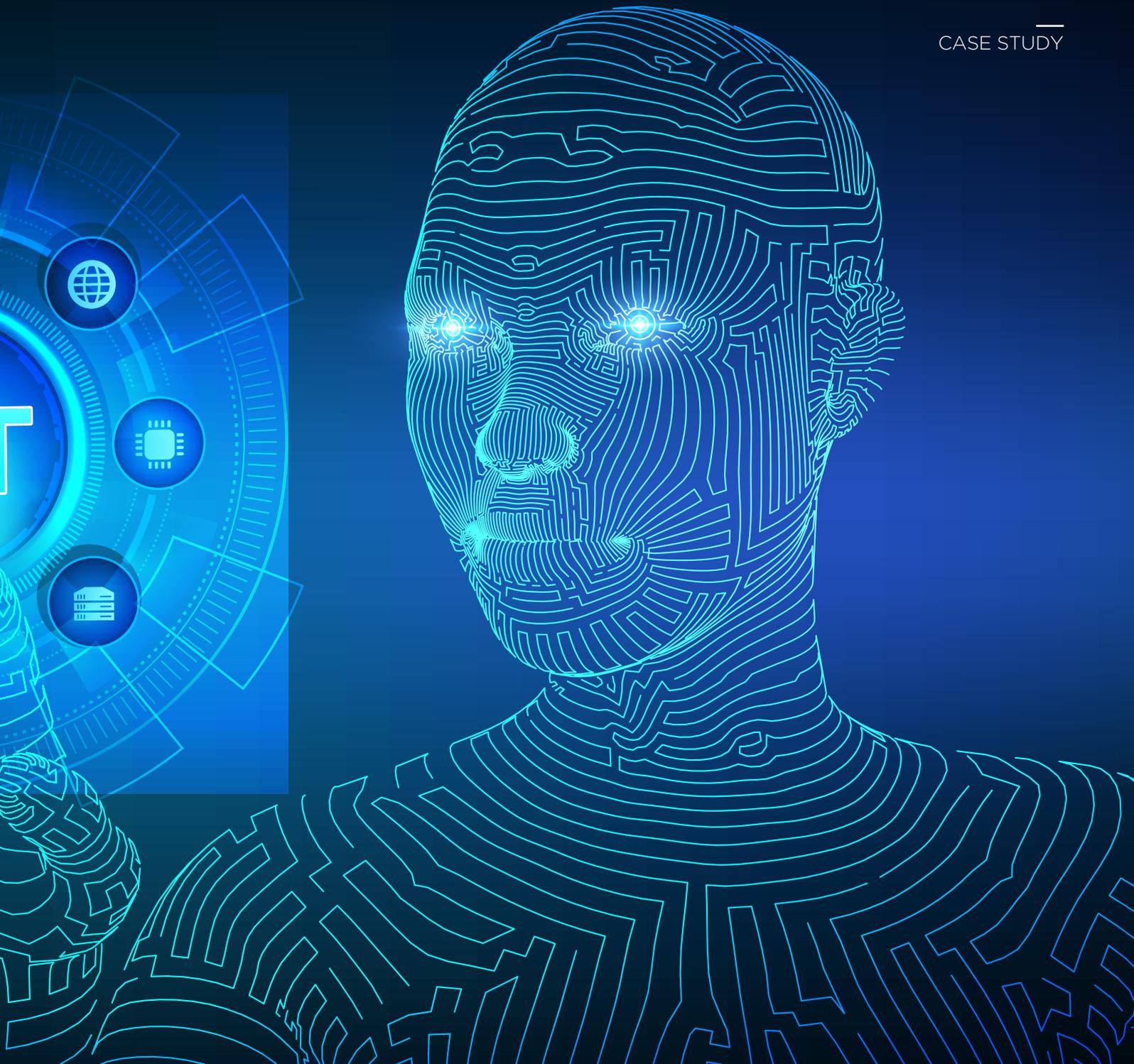
“Working with Datacentrix has been an extremely positive experience, there has been no deadline unmet. Everything was delivered according to plan and on time.

“The Datacentrix team has been very hands-on and has effectively become an extension of our IT department. DNI clients are not affected by any back-end technology

changes, but feedback from staff has been overwhelmingly positive. DNI’s staff stated that the system performance was the best ever experienced within the company.

“DNI IT will continue to ensure that its users have the best in IT infrastructure, by partnering with Datacentrix and other strategic suppliers, in keeping up-to-date with the everchanging IT environment.”

Datacentrix Account Manager Charl Ferreria said the company’s specialist teams leverage the combined power of information and communications technologies to connect,



transform, improve and future-proof business, supporting clients throughout their digital journey.

“Datacentrix offers deep technical expertise across a mature offering, providing proven execution capability that is endorsed by the world’s foremost technology partners,” he said.

“With a strong African footprint, the company is recognised for its agility, in-depth industry knowledge, ethical practices and strong overall performance. Now that DNI’s new server room is fully operational

and its capacity challenges addressed, the organisation will turn its attention to additional requirements to improve system

stability. We’re confident that DNI’s new platform is sustainable enough to meet future requirements.” ■

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