Case study, March 2014:
Marrakech

Cloud pioneer grows with BT partnership

> **"** We get more for our money as the years go by. **"**

Bob Sherlock
Infrastructure Manager, Marrakech

BT

" Even though you are dealing with a global corporation, locally you are dealing with the same people the whole time. That works out really well for us"

Bob Sherlock
Infrastructure Manager, Marrakech

Cloud pioneer grows with BT partnership

Challenge

Irish software company Marrakech was ahead of its time selling Software as a Service (SaaS) before the term was even coined. By the middle of the last decade it was linking buyers and suppliers in an end-to-end process that went from procurement to invoicing through an online hub. High profile enterprise customers like Tesco, the BBC and Ardagh Group signed up for its services.

The company decided to relocate its hosted infrastructure from the US to Ireland. The Dublin-based firm wanted a closer relationship with a local partner that could add value to the business. "We were frustrated with dealing with a data centre without the personal interaction we felt we wanted for such a critical service," said Bob Sherlock, Infrastructure Manager at Marrakech. "At the same time we had a growing customer base in the UK and Europe that we wanted to focus on."

After shortlisting a number of Dublin data centres, BT Citywest emerged as the standout candidate. "We filled a gap in their technical knowledge with our niche skills around infrastructure and availability," said Mark Fagan, Head Of Data Centre Service, BT Ireland.

Solution

The range and scope of solutions set BT apart; managed service responsibilities that went far beyond typical colocation. Along with carrier neutral connectivity and high

availability, a unique requirement of Marrakech was a managed SAN (Storage Area Network). High-end database clusters were needed to run on shared storage at a time when SAN technology was still in its infancy.

BT was the only provider that could give us this. We ended up with a high-end storage capability in terms of performance and availability, only paying a fraction of the cost because it uses a shared model."

Bob Sherlock
Infrastructure Manager, Marrakech

BT also facilitated an optimised environment to run a SaaS solution that could scale to serve enterprise clients. "We were agnostic in terms of technology, listened to what they wanted and matched the infrastructure to their needs. It wasn't proscriptive," explained Mark Fagan. The core stack is built on Oracle Solaris, maintained by a local specialist that works closely with BT.

The technology, however, was only part of the service. Marrakech was able to leverage BT's global reputation and credibility – important for a new firm pursuing high profile customers. Part of this was the

familiarity of the BT brand, but it became something more when prospective customers looked for assurances that a start-up could be trusted with long-term contracts. A commercial agreement was made to ensure BT would guarantee a customer's service if anything happened to Marrakech. This level of business continuity was crucial in persuading Tesco to come on-board.

" Even though you are dealing with a global corporation, locally you are dealing with the same people the whole time. That works out really well for us"

Bob Sherlock
Infrastructure Manager, Marrakech

Result

For over a decade the rock solid relationship between the two companies has grown stronger. Marrakech has let the contract continually roll over, handing further responsibility to BT including network components like firewalls and switches that are now part of the managed service.

Along the way, BT added more infrastructure to support a new service; achieved accreditations to stay ahead of the curve in an increasingly regulated environment; and continued to evolve the storage environment to take advantage of new technologies. The Marrakech physical footprint in Citywest actually reduced as the company grew and costs came down thanks to advances in technology and improved power savings. "We get more for our money as the years go by," said Sherlock.

"Marrakech also benefits from a uniquely personal service. Bob Sherlock has been working with many of the same technicians and engineers in Citywest for a decade. Even though you are dealing with a global corporation, locally you are dealing with the same people the whole time. That works out really well for us," he said.

Because BT is an international company with over 40 data centres around the world,

Marrakech can talk to its customers about global needs and the option of hosting software in another territory if required. It's all part of the future proofing that BT brings to a relationship, according to Fagan. "What they have now is not necessarily what they will have in five years times. They know they are with a service provider who will help drive their business forward to wherever they want to be."

Value

Marrakech has leveraged BT's reputation and expertise for over a decade. The value of the managed service ranges from a unique business continuity agreement to highly specialised storage needs.

We wanted an enterprise class solution that we weren't big enough to buy. It was the deal-maker and we remain very comfortable with the solution BT provides."

Bob Sherlock
Infrastructure Manager, Marrakech

For BT, the highest standards of security and availability are entry-level services. The real value and differentiator is its ability to design data centre architecture specific to each client's requirements, whether it's standard, bespoke or hybrid. "We see our job as matching capability with needs and aligning technology to the business on an ongoing basis," said Mark Fagan.

For Marrakech, the technology was business critical. The added value that they were looking for from the outset was the quality of the relationship.

The personal element is what really makes it for us. BT has always gone out of its way to help us make deals happen."

Bob Sherlock
Infrastructure Manager, Marrakech

![BT logo]

Find out more about BT Ireland

⌨ www.btireland.com

📞 Freephone 1800 924 929

✉@ business@btireland.ie