Connectivity tops CIO concerns

UAE's IT managers joined CPI and eHosting DataFort (eHDF) to discuss the state of enterprise data centre and what they would like to see from vendors and service providers going forward.

CIOs and IT managers in the UAE named connectivity and the lack of redundancy in their data centres one of the biggest issues that they are facing in the country. They stated that connectivity issues will have to be rectified, and more of a free-market like environment created for service providers in order to improve the operational efficiency and productivity at an exclusive CIO roundtable conducted by eHosting DataFort (eHDF) and CPI.

The IT decision makers had gathered at the roundtable to discuss some of the continuing challenges connected to their infrastructure. When asked to name the issues that confronted them while building and maintaining data centres in the country, many also stated that they had to constantly tackle vendors and providers who often knew very little of the solutions that they were selling.

"Compared to the situation in Europe or the United States, where there is a lot of evangelism on technologies, many companies here do not do enough on knowledge transfer. Their internal staff themselves often do not know a lot about the solutions they are selling, and they constantly have to check with their peers in developed markets. Many people in the UAE are still box pushers this way," said Sacha Narinx, technical director for Bios ME.

According to the CIOs, connectivity issues and the lack of redundancy was one of the main reasons that many did not consider managed data centre services seriously in the country. Many also stated that in truth there was not much choice when it comes to managed service provision within the country, especially when it comes to local providers.

"Many a service provider in the market still do not provide proper detailed SLAs (service level agreements) to clients. Often, this leaves the customer with nothing to compare back to on service provision or to properly measure the quality of the services being provided," said Saleem Ahmed, IT manager at Emirates Steel.

The audience also named the lack of experienced IT staff and the unavailability of quality training courses as other factors holding back the market.

"It takes me an average of six to seven months sometimes to find the right resource for certain job titles. We get a lot of resumes when we put out an ad, but to find someone who is of quality and who is the right person it takes time and internal resources," pointed out Tibor Loncsar, director of strategy and operations – IT at Dubai World Trade Centre.

The group also mourned the lack of reliable international service providers and the inability to access and use the resources of international service providers in the country due to either connectivity or data integrity issues.

"From our part, we are constantly in conversation with entities in the UAE to enforce the idea that cheaper bandwidth and better connectivity is essential to the economic development of the country. That if these two factors exist then it is easier for industries to expand their bases in the country, bring in more people and therefore help the entire economy. This is a constant discussion at our end and we will continue to push it," says Yasser Zeineldin, CEO of eHDF.

He also assured that, unlike some other service providers in the country, eHDF does operate with clients on SLAs and contracts across certain metrics.