



# Radical shift?

***Convergence and consolidation are transforming the modern day datacenter. Companies of various sizes pursuing higher growth opportunities and leaning on their IT infrastructures to do so will look at getting their datacenter strategies right in light of the opportunities and the concerns***

In the past several years, the typical data centre has evolved with a focus on optimized designs that enable consolidation and efficiency in dealing with workload provisioning and better power savings. The availability of a variety of smart software management tools that facilitate automation in provisioning IT and its Management as well as next generation hardware appliances in almost all categories relevant to the Datacentre has meant the rapid modernization and consolidation of the datacenter. The journey towards modernization and consolidation of the datacenter

will continue with new investments.

In the Middle East, datacentre investments are expected to rise in tandem with the overall increase in IT spend above the global IT spending average. According to a report issued by Gartner, IT spending in the Middle East region is projected to reach \$192.9 billion in 2013, a 5.5% increase from 2012. Direct investment in datacenter facilities in the Middle East is expected to be also in the double digits - up from \$2.12 billion in 2012.

There are numerous reasons why datacenter investments would be a priority for companies.

Peter D'Souza - Regional Product Manager (NetApp & Data Centre) at Logicom says, "At Logicom, we see more and more customers, across all segments and verticals, making significant investments in datacenters. Having partnered with the industry leaders like Cisco, NetApp and APC (Schneider) we find ourselves at a great advantage dealing with this opportunity. Our reseller partners are to benefit the most, because with us they can find almost all the datacenter products and technologies under one roof."

He adds, "Business continuity is on top of the priority list of any CIO and companies rely on their

information systems to run their operations. Hence, it is important to minimize any chances of disruption. Information security is also a great concern. Information, data and application spread across multiple devices was always going to be difficult to manage and backup. Enterprises have become social and mobile apps are being adopted widely. BYOD trends are increasingly pressurizing enterprises to make investments in DC. Customers today realize the benefits of desktop visualization and see VDI from a cost and application agility perspective; this is going to be the game changer for the future."

Renton D'Souza, Divisional Director at Comstor says, "A number of enterprises in the Middle East are building their data centers from the ground up. Since they are not tasked with overhauling legacy systems, they can focus on deploying technologies that will help them see long term rewards from their investments."

In recent years large organisations in the region have opted to build Tier 3 and Tier 4 data centres especially in Saudi Arabia and UAE. This trend has been further driven by regional collocation and hosting service providers.

Yasser Zeineldin, CEO of eHostingDataFort, a leading Managed Services provider says "At eHDF, we are witnessing first-hand the growth in data centre investment. For instance, regional enterprises are investing heavily in consolidating operations at a single data centre. Cloud is also a leading factor for the investment in technologies and infrastructure with many SMEs opting for public cloud services and enterprises looking at a managed private cloud option."

## Convergence in the datacenter

Convergence is a gaining trend in the industry and is likely to be one of the key challenges as well as opportunity on the way forward. Converged Infrastructure (CI) bundles multiple IT components into a single solution, including

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servers, data storage, networking equipment and software. For instance, Dell has introduced PowerEdge VRTX, the first converged IT solution designed specifically for remote and small office environments, with enterprise-class capabilities in a desk-side, space-saving design.

On convergence in the datacenter and the risk of impacting sales of individual components, Basil Ayass, Marketing Director at Dell Middle East says, "Converged data centres will cannibalise other vendors business as well as our own sales as we have separate networking and storage lines for instance. But this is the future and we will be promoting and marketing this converged solution. We believe this is the future and it does not matter if it affects our storage or networking sales. It may impact our current networking or storage sales but we believe it will open brand new markets for us and we will be able to gain market share from our competitors to make up for any impact on our bottom line."

He adds, "Reducing the size of the data centre is one of the benefits of this technology as well as reducing complexity. When it's all converged and consolidated

you don't have the cables, the different software or the different certifications. A typical IT manager in the region will need different certifications from different vendors-convergence reduces the number of certifications, training, cables and space. This is the future and at Dell we want to embrace it. I believe we will grow our sales because of this."

He further suggests that Convergence is a tool available

to customers as well as hosting providers. Hosting providers can be more competitive as well by embracing this trend in order for them to service more customers, reduce their footprint, and make their operations simpler for them and their customers.

That begs the question whether the converged infrastructure approach creates a possible scenario of investment consolidation and shrinkage of demand eventually for various building blocks like storage, networking and servers?

Peter suggests that the typical datacenter environment will always remain a hybrid



Yasser Zeineldin, CEO, eHostingDataFort

Basil Ayass, Marketing Director, Dell ME

Peter D'Souza, Regional Product Manager  
(NetApp & Data Centre) Logicom

environment.

He adds, "Customers today have a lot more access to data than ever before, they are aware of the data center trends and the changes in the technology landscape. They prefer integrating smarter products from market segment leaders in every domain of the datacenter."

### The road ahead

So what are the essentials of a data centre that is ideal for the cloud era? Is The Software-Defined Data Center that platform that provides enhanced automation, flexibility, and efficiency in IT delivery the future?

Basil says, "Software-defined data centres are the future. It started with servers and today with virtualization, the server has become part of the resource pool. You are indifferent because you are using software to define a virtual machine. This is moving

towards storage and today at Dell we have EqualLogic and Compellent, both virtualized software-defined storage where we are using the software in a smart way to make management of the storage that much easier. The next step is software-defined networking and to this end we have acquired a company called Force10, a company that is a leader in VNA (Virtual Network Architecture) allowing Dell to embrace software-defined networking. Again, this will cannibalize our own business-if you are selling a software-defined solution, why should people buy your legacy solution? But different customers have different requirements and some of them will continue to buy legacy systems."

Software defined datacenter or SDDC is one of the key concepts that will be trending this year in the IT space, says Yasser.

He adds, "SDDC is an interesting idea and many analysts and leading CIOs see it delivering not only much more IT flexibility but also much more agility in an organization's business processes. The key steps in SDDC will be to evolve IT infrastructure into more scalable and manageable resources through the abstraction of servers, storage, networks and applications and making these resources available to users as a service."

Abstracting the IT infrastructure resources and making them available as a service as well incorporation of a business logic layer that accounts for user self-service, SLAs and compliance requirements are the key components of the road towards adopting SDN.

Peter adds, "SDDC is definitely the road ahead, there is no two ways about it, the end game of the SDDC

is to orchestrate, coordinate and apply resources from the server, storage and networking pools to ensure that the applications or services meet the capacity, availability and response time SLAs that the business requires. SDDC provides a vision and roadmap to the next generation data center – one that can deliver not only much more IT flexibility, but also enable much more agility in an organization's business processes."

With data center facilities that are running out of space, power, cooling or perhaps a combination of all three, companies in the region will seek to ensure that they can keep costs down while not compromising on performance. Embarking on the road towards adopting the next generation datacenter will require taking stock of the changing technology trends and adopting the best options.