



DOUBLING PROFITS

Sachin Bhardwaj, eHosting DataFort, Director, Marketing and Business Development, explains how managed hosting services can help SMBs stand out from competition.



The number of small and medium businesses (SMBs) are growing across the Middle East. In fact, the SMB sector plays an important role in the UAE's well-diversified economy, comprising 95 percent of small business and employing 42 percent of the nation's workforce. As a sector, SMBs contribute 40 percent to the value of Dubai's economy, and 60 percent to the UAE's economy. (Sources – Multiple)

Considering the rapid growth of SMBs, there is an increased competition within the sector. Forward thinking SMB owners and managements are strategically embracing technology to streamline processes and restructure their business models for greater profitability. However, continuous changes in the technology landscape, from software to hardware, cybersecurity to data recovery solutions are making it extremely difficult for them to manage and maintain their IT infrastructure in-house.

According to IDC's Worldwide Small and Medium-Sized Business Forecast, SMBs are spending more on software and IT services and will continue to rise through to \$700 billion in 2019. The main reason for increasing investments in IT is that they are looking at alternative technology that will help them gain a competitive

advantage. Many SMBs find it difficult to invest in hardware, run business applications, secure critical data, and more importantly, they do not have the capability of managing all this in-house. Managed hosting eliminates these tasks and frees up their time to drive revenues.

SMBs are looking to simplify IT, and, need robust systems that will help them grow their business. Managed hosting providers can help them with state-of-the-art options that have a positive impact on cost, help them in scaling their IT needs and downsizing operations, and also providing them the flexibility to choose the services to suit their needs.

The cost for having an in-house data centre and maintaining it implies server maintenance, software applications and updates, remaining up-to-date with technology, and security; and the cost for hiring and training in-house staff is also very expensive.

Some of the reasons SMBs must consider managed hosting services include:

Expertise: Managed hosting services provide qualified and experienced staff and technicians who support maintenance, trouble shooting and risk management.

Scalability: Most SMBs will at some point need to scale up their IT infrastructure.

Managed Service Providers (MSPs) are in a position to offer flexibility to scale the services while even providing customised models to suit their individual needs.

Reduced downtime: A service provider's data centre infrastructure is built for high availability, complying with the stringent requirements of business applications. This ensures that the SMB experiences near-zero downtime.

Disaster recovery and backup: All servers and hardware within the premises of the provider are protected against physical threats such as environmental damage or natural calamities. Managed hosting providers perform automated regular backups of all data, which is a fundamental deliverable and one of the most critical responsibilities of the provider.

Monitoring: To ensure reduced downtime providers monitor the servers and the cloud, as well as resource availability and capacity usage.

Reduced costs: With managed hosting, investment is minimised and the SMB gets access to the latest technologies without upfront capital investments and without having to worry about replacing obsolete hardware or compromising on efficiency by using outdated hardware.

Security: The service provider tackles security

risks with adequate firewalls, protecting against hackers and spammers. Conducting vulnerability scans, updating the required software ensures that the data is always safe.

Hardware and software updates: The IT environment is continuously innovating and updating, managed hosting providers guarantee they provide up-to-date technology facilities, software upgrades and security patches.

24x7 availability: Service providers guarantee 24x7 technical assistance and they are available for any unexpected problems or for routine queries.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs): They are clearly defined services to be delivered with accountability and responsibilities. They provide clear pricing and measurable services that will be provided by the Managed Hosting provider.

SMBs are more dependent on technology now than ever before and they have much to gain by availing of managed hosting services, which provides flexibility, increases productivity and strengthens security with overall cost reduction. The services cut across industry verticals including retail, healthcare, e-commerce, finance, legal, education and the government. 