

Nominee: Claranet

Nomination title: **Datacentre Cloud Vendor of the Year**

- What are your company's key distinguishing features and/or USP?

Claranet is uniquely positioned as the largest independently owned managed services provider to the Western European mid-market. Celebrating its 20th birthday this year, the company was founded in 1996, by CEO Charles Nasser. In this time it has evolved from a pioneering ISP into a leading MSP with an expansive product portfolio that encompasses network, public and private cloud hosting, and communications services.

With 18 offices and 37 data centres in the UK, France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal, Claranet has over 1,000 employees and 5,500 customers.

The company is big enough to provide enterprise quality service but small enough to ensure its customers can talk to someone they know if there is an issue. While Claranet has grown internationally, the focus has always been on local service out of local offices, using local data centres.

The company's ambitious growth strategy has led to numerous acquisitions in the past three years, which have broadened Claranet's portfolio with expertise in backup/DR, professional services, Linux, managed public cloud and DevOps capabilities.

Its expertise in hosting is consistently recognised by technology analyst Gartner, who in 2015 positioned Claranet as a 'Leader' in its Magic Quadrant for Cloud-Enabled Managed Hosting, Europe (2015) for the third year in a row.

Claranet takes an application-first approach to customer projects, prioritising the availability, performance and security of a customer's data and applications. This will involve working with the right vendors, and infrastructure, to deliver the optimal solution for the customer. Claranet focuses on the needs of the mid-market, providing robust, enterprise-level offerings, packaged options, entry-level and tiered pricing; consultancy and hybrid models.

Claranet strives to source the best solutions for its customers at every stage. This desire is reflected in its partnerships with leading vendors. Claranet is a VMware Premier Partner, working with VMware to develop new enterprise services, and is part of the Microsoft Cloud Solution Provider Program, enabling Claranet to sell complete Microsoft product packages to suit customer needs. The company is rapidly developing its relationship with AWS, which is currently that of an “Advanced Partner”, and LinuxIT, which Claranet acquired in 2015. Subsequently, the company earned recognition for its Linux expertise at the Red Hat EMEA Partner Awards 2015.

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- **What tangible impact has your company had on the market and your customers?**

From its dependable private MPLS network to its robust managed hosting service, Claranet continues to improve its portfolio and offer its customers new services. Over the past year, Claranet’s unique value proposition can be best demonstrated by its partnership with Unicef UK, the world’s leading organisation for children’s rights and welfare.

Claranet’s dedicated service management team has supported Unicef through a number of key events in 2015, enabling the charity to:

- **Manage web traffic, enabling the sites to perform effectively during crucial periods**
- **Better engage and target supporters online, boosting fundraising campaigns**
- **Raise £6.5 million during its Soccer Aid event**

Digital technology poses significant challenges. Website traffic can vary, particularly during big campaigns, which can put pressure on its hosting arrangements. Any downtime can seriously impact Unicef’s ability to drive support or accept donations, so the charity’s digital team set about finding a more secure and reliable platform on which to host its websites.

The managed hosting solution, underpinned by Claranet’s private MPLS network, supports the majority of Unicef UK’s web presence including the main website, donations funnel and other transactional applications. The infrastructure includes load balancers and Claranet’s web acceleration service, which cache the applications and divert traffic away from the servers themselves, allowing the sites to perform effectively during crucial times.

Unicef worked with Claranet's dedicated Service Management team in order to migrate its Soccer Aid website on the newly commissioned hosting environment. After load testing it became clear that the charity needed to increase the platform's capability and Claranet were quick to add dedicated load balancers and more bandwidth at short notice.

All management of hosting environments was streamlined to a single point of contact, allowing Unicef to dedicate more time to directly adding value to its campaigns. On the night of Soccer Aid, for instance, Claranet's hosting played its part in helping Unicef raise an amazing £6.5 million for children all over the world.

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- What are the major differentiators between your company and your primary competitors?

Claranet's ability to provide a broad range of both network and hosting services is a key part of its cloud value proposition, enabling customers to take every component of their solution from a single supplier.

Claranet offers managed and unmanaged network services, understanding the crucial role of the network in cloud computing and offers one of the most comprehensive, fully integrated portfolios available in today's market. With the option of Quality of Service bandwidth management on its MPLS network, the company can guarantee the high performance of applications and user satisfaction. Combined with a vendor agnostic approach, mobile connectivity options and a range of last-mile access technologies, Claranet offers a truly comprehensive portfolio of network services.

Claranet's complete range of hosting services are deeply integrated with its network and include public and private cloud, managed public cloud (AWS and Azure), DR and backup, DevOps services, on-premises Linux services, Managed Application Hosting, colocation and of course hybrid combinations of all of these. Its application first approach to hosting means the right solution will be delivered, whatever the mix of platforms might be, which ultimately leads to a better user experience.

Lastly, Claranet offers a broad range of communications services including Office 365, managed email, CMS, instant messaging, video conferencing and IP telephony options. Claranet is unique in its ability to offer a truly unified and modular solution where all parts of the portfolio are seamlessly integrated and can be designed into the network. Utilising market leading technology from Microsoft and BroadSoft,

Claranet's range of highly complementary services delivers operational cost savings, flexibility, and scalability, and enable customers to focus on business growth rather than the resource-hungry task of managing their IT infrastructure.

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Why nominee should win

- Claranet's application-first approach prioritises customer experience and is enabled by an agnostic and wide selection of infrastructure
- Claranet hosting services are deeply integrated with its MPLS networks to guarantee application performance
- Claranet is consistently evolving its service portfolio, developing new expertise through its group function and through acquisition
- Claranet is big enough to deliver enterprise services, small enough to care
- Delivery of cost savings, flexibility and scalability through a range of complementary services, enabling customers to focus on business growth

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