

Nominee: Claranet

Nomination title: Claranet: leading integrated network, hosting, and application managed services provider

How long has this organisation been involved in the data centre and/ or IT services and solutions market?

Founded in 1996, Claranet has evolved from pioneering consumer ISP into Western Europe's leading independent MSP for mid-sized companies, with annual revenues of £130 million and over 4,500 customers. Claranet's comprehensive portfolio encompasses integrated network, hosting, and communications solutions.

Claranet achieves competitive advantage through delivering high-quality customer service. This is particularly important in managed services, where solutions are largely custom-built and the investments made in new technology platforms and solutions are significant. Claranet delivers the best 'fit' for customers' specific IT and business needs.

Claranet's size helps it serve the needs of mid-sized customers. The company is large enough, with sufficient network and hosting pedigree, to drive down costs with suppliers. But it is small and agile enough to build personal relationships and thoroughly understand customers' specific IT requirements.

Claranet's industry-leading technology meets customers' varied needs:

Secure network

Strong network infrastructure is vital to successful implementation of cloud computing. Claranet's ISP pedigree enables it to provide its own MPLS network, providing secure remote access. Claranet presents end-to-end hosting and network services in a flexible and easy-to-use package.

Award-winning IaaS platform

Claranet's Virtual Data Centre (VDC), the European market's first integrated IaaS service, was a response to research into end-user concerns about cloud migration. Integration with Claranet's MPLS network increases security, and in-country data centres safeguard data sovereignty. A software orchestration layer makes VDC the market's first hypervisor-agnostic solution, addressing concerns about vendor lock-in and migrating between virtualised environments.

Managed application hosting

Managed application hosting provides full access to application development environments while preventing disruption to infrastructure, staging, and live environments. Organisations can focus on application development and testing, knowing that applications are running on a robust managed platform.

As Claranet evolves, it incorporates new technologies to meet customer needs and reach new markets. In February and March 2014, Claranet acquired Echiron, a Portuguese managed hosting and applications provider, and Grita, a French provider of hosting services to the healthcare sector. These follow the acquisitions in late 2012 of Star (UK) and Typhon (France). Star added communications expertise to the portfolio, while Grita brought HADS (Hébergeur Agrée de Données de Santé), the French Ministry of Health's certification for hosting private medical data.

Are there any key projects delivered in the last year that demonstrate this candidate's suitability for the award?

Project 1: Invicta

This project demonstrates Claranet's commitment to providing secure and reliable services that enable customers to focus on business growth rather than IT management:

Invicta Telecare, the UK's largest independent supplier of life-saving alarm and monitoring systems for vulnerable people, was struggling with increasing demands on its call centre and CRM tools because of its fragmented IT infrastructure. It needed a partner to redesign and manage its networks, and let employees focus on their primary tasks.

Claranet runs Invicta's applications on its private and robust MPLS network, connecting its two locations with geographically separate data centres. If one site went down, the other could maintain the load seamlessly – vital when downtime really can be a matter of life and death. Invicta's IT staff can now focus on innovation and growth rather than maintenance

Project 2: Broadgate

This project demonstrates Claranet's responsiveness to sudden changes in customer circumstances, and its ability to deliver appropriate solutions within challenging timeframes, helping to build trust with customers:

Broadgate Estates manages 20 London property developments. Staff at each site require access to the company's network and applications. Corporate restructuring saw Broadgate's IT infrastructure separated from the parent company it had previously shared this with, and the company faced a challenging deadline by which to find a new solution or face damaging downtime.

Claranet ensured a quick, smooth transition to an integrated hosting and network service to address performance issues with Broadgate's WAN, increase the efficiency of its applications while accommodating peaks and troughs in activity, and enable it to provide an enhanced customer and employee experience.

What key vendor and industry accreditations does the nominee hold?

Claranet's accreditations, certifications, and partnerships include:

- ISO/IEC 2000
- ISO/27001:2005
- ISO 9001:2008
- ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library)
- PCI-DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security)
- Microsoft Hosting Gold Partner
- VMware Premier Partner
- PRINCE2 methodology
- HADS (Hébergeur Agrée de Données de Santé) – French Ministry of Health certification for hosting of private medical data

What endorsements does that nominee hold?

Gartner

In July 2013, Gartner positioned Claranet as a 'Leader' in its Magic Quadrant for European Managed Hosting: Claranet "[...] helps meet increased demand for more flexible hosting of web-based applications... As hosting of complex, web and e-commerce solutions becomes an important part of Claranet's hosting and network services portfolio, it has invested in creating standard platforms for running families of applications."

Megabuyte

Megabuyte calls Claranet "[...] a fairly unique beast... significantly bigger than most of its independent peers, more international, having a broader product portfolio that gets further up into the value chain with applications hosting, whilst still being owner-managed."

Awards

Claranet has been recognised for its commitment to customers: Winner of the SVC Award for Best Customer Service Strategy; Finalist in Quality Service Provider of the Year category (2014 UK Customer Satisfaction Awards). Claranet is committed to providing the highest quality of service throughout the customer journey – from pre-sales and solution design, through delivery, to post-implementation. This is enshrined in Claranet's mission statement: "...to enable our customers to reap the huge benefits that can be accrued from Internet-enabled technology and cloud computing."

Strategic approach

CEO and founder Charles Nasser was named International Entrepreneur of the Year (2013 Data Centre & Cloud Awards). As the market landscape changed, he steered Claranet's evolution into managed services to safeguard growth. The company is financially independent – growth has been financed by debt, not venture capital or institutional investment. This enables Claranet to focus on addressing customers' specific and long-term needs.

Why nominee should win

- Legacy history as ISP and evolution into MSP, in line with evolving technology landscape
- Evolution of product portfolio to meet customers needs as the market continues to evolve and change
- Competitive advantage – business focused on long-term customer relationships and customer needs and requirements.
- Validation of company's strategic approach, through analyst and industry awards and recognition
- Best-practice industry and vendor certifications and accreditations