Nominee: Claranet Ltd

Nomination title: Data Centre Cloud Vendor of the Year

Claranet Ltd is a privately-owned company offering IT infrastructure platforms and services to businesses in the UK and Europe across a broad range of industry sectors. Founded in 1996 by CEO Charles Nasser, it has evolved from a pioneering ISP into a leading MSP with a product portfolio that encompasses network, public and private cloud hosting, and communications services. It has been recognised as a 'Leader' in Gartner's Magic Quadrant for Managed Hybrid Cloud Hosting, Europe for the past five years, and was included in the inaugural Magic Quadrant for Public Cloud Infrastructure Managed Service Providers, Worldwide in 2017. It is the only constituent in both groups that has also achieved AWS Premier Consulting Partner status, which underlines the unique breadth of Claranet's vision and its capability to meet a comprehensive range of customer requirements.

Claranet enables organisations to master the complexities and toolsets offered through the Big Three public cloud platforms (Amazon Web Services, Microsoft, and Google), tailoring these to its customers' specific needs. In 2017, Claranet became a Kubernetes Certified Service Provider, in recognition of its successful track record in assisting organisations in adopting containerisation software. It achieved the highest level of AWS partnership, AWS Premier Consulting Partner status, reflecting its capacity to utilise the platform for business transformation. It is also a Microsoft Cloud Solution Gold Partner, a Google Cloud Platform Partner and a VMware Premier Partner, working with VMware to develop new enterprise services.

Thanks to the company's success, Claranet has been able to undergo strong growth in 2017, through a mixture of strategic acquisitions and organic growth. Notably, 2017 saw Claranet acquire UK-based security solutions provider Sec-1, French DevOps and cloud specialist Oxalide, and Portuguese IT services provider ITEN Solutions. In recognition of this growth, the company achieved the rank of 178th in The Sunday Times Top Track 250 for 2017.

Part of Claranet's long term growth strategy involves studied acquisitions and organic growth, targeted at opening up certain markets and developing deep expertise. The company's revenues for the 2017 fiscal year were £216.5 million, up from £152.5 the previous year, while Adjusted EBITDA grew by 32 per cent to £38.7 million.

Claranet focuses on managing customer relationships in real time, using specialist software to keep close tabs on how quickly and effectively the company is dealing with queries. 80 per cent of

service tickets are resolved by a first-line team, and the organisation maintains a 99 per cent call handle rate, and a 97 per cent alert handle rate.

Commenting on the level of support received, some of Claranet's customers have said the following:

"What Claranet provides is incredible flexibility – rightsizing capacity as our business evolves." – Doug Gardner, CIO of River Island

"Working with Claranet has been a breeze. They are great people, they are down to earth, and they explain it to you on a level you can understand." – Howard Bryant, CIO of MyOptique

"At every turn, Claranet has been fast to react, and have evolved the solution to meet our often-complex requirements." – Tina Walton, CIO of The Priory Group

Acquiring Sec-1 in 2017 enabled Claranet to reinforce its security-focused expertise and further develop its broad skillset. Recently, the acquisition of French cloud services specialist Oxalide not only expanded its reach to a dynamic market, but also bolstered its cloud expertise in the region. Claranet now has operations in the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Brazil.

This growth means Claranet is large enough to achieve economies of scale and a wide range of skills, yet retains focus and agility. Maintaining local offices and local services enables customers to achieve competitive advantage.

Claranet's capacity to provide a broad range of hosting, network, and communications services within an integrated solution is a key part of its cloud value proposition. This provides superior business value and customer experience from a single provider.

While Claranet is increasingly moving its customers toward the cloud, it recognises that public cloud is not the answer for every application currently. The diverse range of applications that modern businesses use have different requirements, and a range of hosting services are needed to suit the needs of mid-market customers. As such, the company builds its services with an 'application first' focus, creating a broad range of managed services, based on hyper-scale public

cloud platforms and its own hosting infrastructure, while also looking to support and migrate customers who still use on-premises IT infrastructure.

In anticipation of increasing market demand, Claranet has invested in broadening the breadth of its cloud services, particularly within the public cloud, which Claranet believes to be a unique tool in the development of transformative applications. Claranet maintains a vendor-agnostic approach, keeping close ties with Amazon, Microsoft, and Google in order to provide the most suitable solution for each client. Moreover, recognising the close link between effective public cloud deployment and the DevOps way of working, Claranet has focused on deepening its DevOps expertise with moves such as the acquisition of Bashton.

Its hosting capacities have been boosted over the past year - the acquisition of Oxalide not only expanded Claranet's reach in a sizeable market, but also brought in an organisation renowned for its knowledge of business applications for mid-market organisations.

Being able to serve mid-market organisations sets Claranet apart from a number of its competitors in smaller markets, such as Switzerland. As these markets tend to be small, it is difficult for companies to find highly experienced service providers locally, but companies are also put off by larger providers. Claranet is one of a small number of providers that can effectively serve the mid-market.

Why nominee should win

• Major growth in cloud-based offerings in 2017, including expansion of its dominant public cloud solutions.

• Significant growth due to organic success and acquisitions, including Sec-1, Oxalide, and ITEN Solutions.

• Comprehensive collaboration with Amazon, Microsoft and Google public cloud platforms enables solutions to be carefully tailored to customers' needs.

• An extensive portfolio of solutions to serve a wide range of business and IT needs.

• Fantastic quality of service throughout the customer journey, starting at pre-sales through to post-implementation.