

CASE STUDY



Migration of 6,000 users in 150 offices worldwide

ORGANIZATION:

International Rescue Committee (IRC), operating in over 40 countries and in 220 U.S. cities, helping people rebuild their lives.

CHALLENGE:

Overburdened IT staff, aging Microsoft Exchange services, in need of migration with zero downtime – without touching every remote desktop.

SOLUTION:

Datapipe's Exchange as a Service

DATAPIPE

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FINDING THE PERFECT PARTNER

SNAPSHOT

In 2011, the IRC restored hope and opportunity for millions of conflict-affected people around the world – giving 1.7 million people access to clean drinking water and sanitation, providing 21 million people with primary and reproductive healthcare, vaccinating 500,000 children against disease, and helping nearly 200,000 women deliver healthy babies. The IRC is also dedicated to empowering and educating those who need it, training 11,000 educators and supporting 2,225 schools attended by 420,000 students.

Completing these noble objectives takes an efficiently managed IT infrastructure. But for the IRC, the challenge of maintaining this infrastructure proved to be too time consuming, pulling the company's IT staff into rudimentary maintenance tasks and away from improving communication services to employees scattered across remote areas of the globe.

THE CHALLENGE

The minute after Tropical Storm Isaac hit in 2012, the IRC was there in Haiti responding with emergency relief. As war rages in Syria, IRC aid workers are on-site bringing food, shelter, and healthcare to tens of thousands of refugees. When the City of Rikuzentakata was almost wiped off the map by the largest earthquake in Japan's

history, the IRC partnered with local resources to protect and re-build the lives of refugees.

When the International Rescue Committee needed help off-loading their IT burden, Datapipe provided the hosting and managed services they required.

The IRC's technology infrastructure serves more than 6,000 users at 150 offices across the globe. Since humanitarian aid isn't a 9-to-5 job, the business needs to remain running 24 hours per day. By 2011, the company's server and storage infrastructure in Midtown Manhattan began to show its age. With little redundancy and an overburdened engineering and IT staff, the data center was in need of its own aid mission.

"Our IT infrastructure just wasn't built for what we were asking. We wanted this small, dedicated staff to not only service headquarters – but to deliver IT services to some of the most remote locations on the planet. With so much at stake, it just didn't make any sense to rely on this aging infrastructure," said Michael Boeglin, Director of Global Infrastructure, International Rescue Committee.

Because timely and accurate sharing of data, files and logistics are central to relief efforts, the IRC focused on making its Microsoft Exchange migration a top priority.

The system contained more than 6,000 user mailboxes and was running on an aging Exchange 2007 platform hosted in their own facilities. In addition, the existing platform offered little redundancy and limited backup power – meaning critical data was at risk every time the IRC encountered their own IT issues. To alleviate the redundancy problems, the IRC also made it a goal to implement an effective disaster recovery plan in the event of an IT failure.

The organization also set to relocate all enterprise services into a secure, fault tolerant environment. IRC's IT staff wanted to offload management of all non-specialized technologies (such as Exchange, VMware, SQL) and remove the storage management burden from their daily task lists.

THE SOLUTION

Initially, the group reviewed a variety of options – including managed services, traditional colocation, and even Google Apps. But the companies providing these solutions ultimately put the cost barrier far too high and the organizations couldn't guarantee the low levels of downtime the IRC demanded.

“Whenever you say the word ‘migration’ in our business, it raises eyebrows. Because our IT infrastructure is so critical to everything we do, downtime is simply not acceptable. Additionally, since users are often housed in remote locations and working off intermittent satellite links, there's just no way to stay in touch during this critical migration. It soon became clear that our only choice was to find a provider who could guarantee as little down time as possible,” continued Boeglin.

The IRC found the solution to its problems in Datapipe's Exchange as a Service offering. The service delivers a secure, consistent, and efficiently managed messaging infrastructure, specifically configured to enhance any company's communication capabilities. Datapipe's offering is built upon Microsoft Exchange and provides fully managed administration services, including: 24 x 7 x 365 monitoring and support, diagnostics, problem resolution, migration, patching and upgrades for critical messaging applications. Datapipe also delivers flexible implementation – allowing the IRC to customize e-mail size limits and retention periods, while providing the added security to prevent data leaks and maintain compliance. It also allows for virtual machine integration, offering the economic and scalability benefits of a cloud-based service in a private environment. Leveraging secure encrypted tunnels, Datapipe services are integrated directly into any onsite Active Directory (AD). In addition, Datapipe's private cloud delivers the benefits of an on premise solution without the burden of management.



OPERATIONAL IMPACT

RESULTS & BENEFITS

- Lowered operating costs through a combination of traditional colocation and managed services
- A flexible, secure, and high availability Exchange environment providing very little downtime
- Easy-to-scale environment enables the ability to add resources with virtually no lead time
- More time to focus on rescue missions, as Datapipe handles the management of infrastructure

Within six months, the International Rescue Committee had made a successful transition to Datapipe – making use of a hybrid solution that combined traditional colocation features alongside managed services. While the IRC retains control of key business applications and network management, the company now offloads Exchange, VMware farms, database clusters, backup and system monitoring to Datapipe.

New colocation services are supported out of Datapipe's New Jersey and California data centers and the IRC rents individual racks from Datapipe to manage VMware, SQL clusters, Exchange, bandwidth and storage. With guidance from the IRC, Datapipe was also able to move the company's data storage and re-stage the data from 10 mission-critical applications such as procurement, Intranet and SharePoint, refugee resettlement and grant management systems, as well as various legacy desktop applications. To help ensure a constant data flow, Datapipe also implemented multiple failover alternatives, ensuring that the IRC would experience very little downtime.

Backed by Datapipe's Exchange as a Service solution, a true "zero touch" Exchange solution housed in the private cloud was created – building an entirely new, flexible and secure IT environment. In addition, six Exchange servers now offer high availability and resiliency in case the primary site should fail and there are also three additional servers running Active Directory.

"The great thing about Datapipe is it provides a highly reliable, easy-to-scale Exchange environment with very little downtime. It not only helps keep operating costs low, but allows us to add resources with virtually no lead time." Looking ahead, the organization now has the flexibility to build out its infrastructure on the fly – rolling out new applications to field workers as necessary. Datapipe is also the foundation for the organization's Information and Communications Technologies for Development (ICT4D) initiative, bringing up-to-date communications technologies to less developed regions.

Concluded Boeglin: "At the IRC, every minute of every day is consumed with helping those in need. We simply don't have the time to worry about the 'what- ifs' of IT infrastructure failure. Datapipe has effectively taken this burden off our plates, letting us stick to what we do best – save lives."

DATAPIPE

A next generation MSP, Datapipe is recognized as the pioneer of managed services for public cloud platforms. Datapipe has unique expertise in architecting, migrating, managing and securing public cloud, private cloud, hybrid IT and traditional IT. The world's most trusted brands partner with Datapipe to optimize mission-critical and day-to-day enterprise IT operations, enabling them to transform, innovate, and scale. Backed by a global team of experienced professionals and world-class interconnected data centers, Datapipe provides comprehensive cloud, compliance, security, governance, automation and DevOps solutions. Gartner named Datapipe a leader in the Magic Quadrant for Cloud-Enabled Managed Hosting.

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