

Five nines, two industry leaders, one hybrid success story

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Achieving the high availability, minimal downtime, and absolute data integrity that comes with hybrid cloud ingenuity





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Modernised infrastructure. These two words are weighed with far more than just the idea that legacy technology and systems are replaced by the shiny and the new.

For Principa, modernised infrastructure was the terminology that defined their smart move to a hybrid cloud environment

that allowed the company to fully align internal systems with strategic objectives and overcome lingering system performance and infrastructure challenges.

“Principa wanted technology that would allow them to free up capacity and focus outwards, on strategic initiatives, rather than having to focus inwards on addressing operational challenges,” says Johan De Villiers CEO at First Technology. “They wanted their data and analytics toolkits to be compliant and capable, providing them with the insights they needed to run innovation, not run around patching operational problems within their internal environment.”

Principa had been juggling numerous challenges with regards to system efficiency and scalability, delivering a less than optimal support to product innovation and growth. The company serves multiple clients over more than 20 countries and has delivered more than 2,000 analytical projects to date.

Building software solutions, predictive models, wrangling client data, refining complexities – the company was focused on providing exceptionally high-end data driven solutions and services to its customer base, while navigating ongoing IT operational constraints.

“Our infrastructure partner was holding us back and consuming valuable time and focus from our IT department,” says Jaco Rossouw, CEO at Principa. “We had to shift the focus away from problem solving and BAU support towards business strategy, proactive investment and streamlined IT infrastructure. We had already partnered with First Technology in modernising our hardware so it made sense to partner with them in modernising our data centre infrastructure, streamlining our business operations and leveraging the capabilities of a hybrid cloud environment.”

The first step was to move the Principa core servers hosted in an on-premise data centre in Johannesburg to Cape Town in the middle of a global pandemic. This involved shifting vast racks down a long road at a time when transport systems were locked down and difficult to navigate. Needless to say, it was an achievement seamlessly managed by the First Technology team, and the data infrastructure was efficiently re-located, connected and integrated.

“It took the team less than 24 hours to move the equipment from Johannesburg to Cape Town, get all the connectivity up and running, and then activate the required access for our teams,” says Rossouw. “In spite of a severe national lockdown, the racks were ready, the data integrity assured, and the system running to our very high standards of five nines – 99,99999 availability. The move gave us the improved latency, connectivity and heft we needed to tap into a fully realised and capable hybrid cloud environment.”

From the massive move of equipment to the finest detail in delivery, First Technology ensured that the infrastructure was properly integrated into a hybrid cloud environment. The company now has dedicated server racks in a FirstNet Cloud environment with the guaranteed five nines of uptime availability and has fundamentally shifted the complexities of system maintenance and IT downtime.

In addition, the problems of connectivity, power, cooling, and both physical and cyber security had to be addressed. “Security is one of the critical aspects of this move,” says Rossouw. “Our data and solutions have to be hosted in a highly secure environment so this move allowed us to invest into robust security designed to mitigate serious risks such as data or security breaches.”

The solution delivers to all of Principa’s comprehensive Infrastructure-as-a-Service and Software-as-a-Service requirements, minimising the need for additional support and ensuring that there is a reduced risk of poor service delivery. With one service provider and a single point of service, the Principa hybrid cloud solution is tightly managed within rigorous confines. It also opens the door to further expand services, customer solutions and capabilities as the IT team can now focus on critical strategic initiatives rather than on day-to-day operational support.

“We specialise in data-driven solutions, and we had to position our technology to align with our solution delivery,” concludes Rossouw. “We are absolutely compliant with regulations such as POPIA and GDPR, among others, and we provide comprehensive protection for the data we work with. We can engage with our remote workforce, a diverse client

base, and ongoing market demands, on demand. And we can adapt our proficiencies to meet evolving business strategies as and when required, scaling our hybrid cloud investment to suit what we need. It's the best of both worlds."

The partnership between the two market leaders, Principa and First Technology, took Principa's ageing infrastructure into the cloud, enabled comprehensive digital transformation, reduced expenditure, and increased innovation. All in one, swift, hybrid move.

About First Technology

One of South Africa's largest independent national IT solution providers, First Technology provides organisations with managed services and solutions that maximise business productivity while minimising the total cost of ownership. Founded more than 35 years ago, the company has established impressive foundations and expertise, assuring its customers of excellent support and technical advisory that will deliver results today, and into the future.

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