

Newsletter

The last 12 months have been extremely successful for Continent 8 and there are no signs of the current growth trends letting up into 2015

Expansion to Support Growing Client Base

We yet again find ourselves nearing capacity in several locations with immediate additional expansion plans underway to support this growth. Having recently opened new data halls in the Isle of Man and Malta, we are yet again embarking on the provisioning of new data halls in Gibraltar, a second and geographically diverse location in Malta and hosting partnerships in New Jersey with a mid-term plan to open a dedicated data centre within the next 12 months. We have also expanded our network reach to New York, New Jersey, Central America and Asia.

New Jersey

In 2014, co-founder and CEO Michael Tobin opened the first Continent 8 branded North American data centre in New Jersey. This centre provides a suite of hosting and managed service offerings to the New Jersey market, supported by the IT resources and experience of Continent 8. In addition to the standard co-location and managed service offerings, it is offering customers its DDoS Prevention and Cloud Backup services.

Global DDoS Attacks

Defacement and downtime are only two of the consequences for organisations struck by DDoS attacks when impact on the brand reputation can be catastrophic. With the recent increase in global DDoS attacks across all industry sectors, Continent 8 has made significant network capacity improvement to help protect your business. Full details on page 4.

Cloud Backup

Cloud Backup, launched by Continent 8 in late 2013, offers feature rich but low cost solutions to IT departments, emphasises Continent 8's Head of Product Stephen Trimble. It also offers improved reliability and speed of recovery, a more secure method of file transfer, reduced operating and administrative costs, smarter use of IT resources, stronger compliance safeguards and eliminates the shortcomings of tape backup. "This is a revolutionary solution - it is secure, cost effective and reliable," says Stephen. "This is a complete backup and recovery solution for protecting physical and virtual environments, regardless of their location."

Prestigious Accolade

Over the last 15 years Continent 8 has established itself as the leading provider of managed hosting and network solutions to many of the world's largest online businesses. This has been recognised by the accolade of 'Company of the Year' in the 2014 Isle of Man Newspapers' Awards for Excellence. The panel of judges remarked that the privately owned company, with its headquarters in the Isle of Man, demonstrated a clear strategy along with innovative ways of sourcing and delivering its service on and off island. It recognised that the company has a firmly established local and international profile and has evidenced high levels of ambassadorial activity on behalf of the island. Co-founder and CEO Michael Tobin said the company has also identified and begun working with a number of technology focused companies which have key synergies with Continent 8.

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Global Network doubles in capacity

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DDoS Mitigation

Smart, Scalable, Targeted



Housing Crucial Data: Which Eggs in Which Baskets?

Continent 8's Head of Product, **Stephen Trimble** takes a look at ways of protecting valuable data.



Data is arguably one of a company's most important assets, and any breach, loss or compromise of it can be catastrophic. So choosing the best solution for housing that data is undoubtedly one of the most crucial decisions that any CTO/CIO currently faces.

It comes down to carefully choosing - which eggs do you put into which baskets. The problem is that for decades the IT pendulum has swung between centralised and de-centralised systems, and even today continues to do so.

Is it that a mix of centralised and de-centralised systems is needed? To help, we need to look more closely at what is happening and what's driving the cycle.

Firstly, there has always been a fairly simple economic argument for centralised computing which can be summarised as:

- ✓ With the capital cost of computing power declining, support costs tend to predominate
- ✓ Centralised support costs less than de-centralised support
- ✓ Therefore, centralised computing models will ultimately win financially

Centralisation also makes it easier to create an effective disaster recovery strategy, minimise manpower 'spread', obtain volume discounts on technology purchases and lower maintenance and training costs through standardisation.

However, if this was true 100 per cent of the time, we would have all now embraced a centralised computing model. Yet, instead we've also seen a constant swing towards de-centralisation so, clearly, there are other factors at work.

So why de-centralise? Firstly, it's generally accepted that raw centralised computing power costs more than de-centralised computing. In other words, it's more expensive to hook 32 CPUs and 768GB of RAM onto the same backplane than it is to purchase 32 separate 1CPU machines each with 24GB of RAM. Also, it all has to be bought at the same time so difficult to spread costs.

Another issue with a centralised computing model is the cost to the business of maintaining access to a single, large computing 'stack'. One obvious cost area is basic network access - how much is it going to cost to get all the bandwidth needed (in both directions) at appropriately low latencies, from anywhere in the world to a single site / geographic location?

Crucially, a significant cost is keeping any centralised computing resource up and available all the time. With 'all eggs in one basket' as it were, the entire business can be impacted by the same one outage, be it at a single data centre, cloud platform or across an entire geographic area.

One of the most recent examples of de-centralisation of technology is the 'block chain' - the engine on which Bitcoin and indeed other crypto-currencies is built. This is a new kind of distributed consensus system that allows transactions, or other data, to be securely stored and verified without any centralised authority at all; this is because they are effectively validated by the entire network.

Those transactions don't have to be financial; that data doesn't have to be money. The block chain engine can be used for a whole array of other applications, and it will be.

So, the centralised versus de-centralised cycle keeps turning because in any given computing 'lifetime' the costs of all of the above factors rise and fall. This in turn leads IT global decision-makers to optimise one factor over another, thus promoting shifts in computing strategy, and the wheel then turns again.

There is little doubt that in the data centre world the pendulum is now swinging back towards de-centralisation:

- ✓ Driven largely by a need to be 'closer' to users
- ✓ To mitigate geographical risks
- ✓ To ensure compliance with global regulation
- ✓ To ensure that data 'residence' requirements are met

This momentum won't stop. So when choosing a data centre partner, you want one where you don't have to choose a single basket to fill with all of your eggs. You want one who won't mind (and won't penalise you) if you want to move your eggs between baskets. Most importantly, you want one who has baskets around the globe to cater for changes in your business, and changes in IT approach.

There are sometimes other external forces (regulatory, legal, license stipulations, etc.) which seek to dictate the baskets you can use; often favouring a geographically centralised approach. To be truly global, and to give your customers the best service, it is often a mix of centralised and de-centralised systems which wins the day.

Whether your business has chosen to centralise or decentralise your systems, or you just aren't sure yet, one thing you can be certain of is that it won't be that way forever; the cycle will come round again. The important thing is that you are making decisions now as part of a long-term strategy so you can actually do both.

Continent 8's Continued Investment in Gibraltar

Peter Williams, director of global sales, discusses Continent 8's recent developments in Gibraltar



Unprecedented Growth

Continent 8 Technologies, now entering its fourth year of operating in Gibraltar, has witnessed unprecedented demand from the gaming industry for hosting and network services.

It has seen our unique location in Admiralty Tunnel (formerly the Vault) yet again reaching near capacity and ready to invest and expand for the third time in as many years.

Service uptake in the last two quarters, ending September 2014, witnessed an unprecedented level of growth in this location and we again embarked upon the fitting out of new data halls to meet the requirements of a growing market.

Located 500 meters within the Rock, it is one of the most secure and resilient locations with respect to power and connectivity. Investment of several million pounds to bring this location up to the standard which Continent 8 provides globally at its other nine locations has seen the replacement of the entire supporting electrical and cooling infrastructure. The result is a facility which is secure, reliable and a world-class location to host infrastructure and network.

It is comforting also to know that Gibraltar itself is investing to upgrade the power infrastructure following the events on Easter Sunday last when power and telecoms were lost to most of Gibraltar. Although operators hosted at Continent 8 remained live throughout the incident due to the added redundancy we invested in, risks such as this need to be removed from Gibraltar. Trust must exist for operators and businesses in the long term.

Reaction to the Point of Consumption Tax

With regard to regulation - and despite the concerns regarding the potential impact of the UK regulation specifically and point of consumption tax - Gibraltar remains an attractive and growing location for the operation of eGaming businesses.

With the effective bringing to an end of the so-called 'white list' that allowed operators licensed in Alderney, Antigua, the Isle of Man, Malta and Gibraltar to advertise their services in the UK, we are seeing steady growth and renewed interest in Gibraltar and Malta with their European Union status.

Gaming operators can address all markets from Gibraltar or Malta without restriction, while still enjoying a preferential financial framework and regulators (that are consistent and effective with their approach to regulation) who provide stability and the ability to plan for the future. In fact, the UK regulation is no different from other regulated European markets in this regard as it does not require infrastructure to be hosted locally. This means that for Continent 8, Gibraltar remains amongst our highest priorities in terms of investment and growth.

A seller's market

With supply for hosting services falling short of demand we are embarking yet again upon significant expansion to offer more choice in this market. Many operators to this day still host infrastructure in custom-built data centre environments as an extension of their office locations. Continent 8 has provided choice to the market and will continue to build to meet the existing and growing demand for such decisions going forward.

While all the investment in data centres and local power stations is a positive development in Gibraltar, these elements really need to be considered as a given. What truly differentiates however, is an effective network; this is true for the operators who use such a network but also for Continent 8 as a provider. Continent 8 is uniquely positioned, purely and simply, because we operate a global private redundant network with a team of highly effective network support personnel operating 24/7 in Europe and North America.

This type of control is essential in delivering predictable and reliable levels of service and being in a position to effectively mitigate distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks. Continent 8 operates the only native MPLS service from Gibraltar with network points of presence in London, Paris, Milan, New York, New Jersey and Montreal to name but a few locations.

Looking forward

Having spent the initial three years in Gibraltar focusing on bringing our facility to a high standard we now seek to expand our service reach in Gibraltar from not just the gaming community, but to the wider local business sector. We are currently preparing for the announcement of a suite of services to be made available to all Gibraltar-based businesses that will see more choice for local business.

We have also appointed Daniel Ghio, formerly a data centre and network technical support engineer, to our local sales team. Gibraltar offers all of the necessary ingredients for a company such as Continent 8 to bring choice and quality of services to support not just eGaming, but all industry verticals with effective and reliable managed hosting and network solutions.

In addition to Gibraltar, Continent 8 has multiple centres of excellence around the world, including the Isle of Man, London, Paris, Dublin, Malta, Guernsey, Singapore, New Jersey and Montreal with a globally distributed and privately owned redundant network. We also continue to add further managed services to our suite of offerings including cloud and remote online back-up, disaster recovery and professional services. Continent 8 also partners with key industry leaders to deliver leading technologies to our clients, including DDoS with Arbor and cloud back-up services with Asigra, both industry leaders in their technologies.

Continent 8 remains committed to providing a level of excellence that the customer should expect as 'business as usual'.

Largest network refresh in 15 years, delivering more than double global capacity

Continent 8 has recently completed the single largest refresh and upgrade programme of our global network since its inception, over 15 years ago.

The upgrade included an infrastructure refresh, delivering standardisation enhancements across the globe resulting in improved operational performance contributing to overall network stability. Parallel to the infrastructure refresh, a significant investment was made in core network expansion, with all core global sites now linked by multiple resilient high bandwidth circuits.

Additional PoP (Point of Presence) deployments took the company's global count into double figures. In addition, new interfaces into Tier-1 Peering partners at some of the largest internet exchanges were implemented, at sites such as New York, London and Paris. As a result, the company has more than doubled its global IP Transit commitments, taking our capability well above the maximum size of any of the volumetric attacks observed against any of our clients; volumes akin to that of some of the largest global ISPs.

At a time when global DDoS threats are at an all-time high and many attacks are seeing unprecedented bandwidth volumes, this secures the company's position well; to continue to build on the experience and knowledge gained in protecting data assets, whether hosted in a Continent 8 data centre or not. Continent 8 continues to offer a guarantee on MPLS services between global sites too; these are SLA-backed private services to customers capable of delivering non-public traffic – they remain safe, as they simply cannot be attacked from the internet.

Continent 8's network and the jurisdictions in which it operates is as unique today as it was at the company's formation, and still remains one of the key drivers for any multi-jurisdictional data requirement. This network upgrade not only secures the company's position for the existing client base, but also places the business extremely well strategically for the introduction and rollout of global Cloud-based solutions.



10 Data Centres 1 Global network

Connecting centres
of business around the world

Contacting Continent 8

Sales

Europe
+44 1624 694625
North America
+1-514-461-5120
sales@continent8.com

Technical

Europe
+44 1624 694611
North America
+1 514 461 5111
support@continent8.com

Headquarters

Continent 8 House
Pulrose Road, Douglas
IM2 1AL
Isle of Man
Tel. +44 1624 678 888
info@continent8.com