



CASE STUDY
MANAGED HOSTING
SERVICE WITH
IZO™ PRIVATE CLOUD
HANDS RETAILER
TOOLS TO TACKLE
MARKET ENTRANTS.

INFINITI RETAIL GROUP GETS BUSINESS AGILITY TO COMBAT COMPETITORS WITH A TATA COMMUNICATIONS HYBRID CLOUD SOLUTION.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

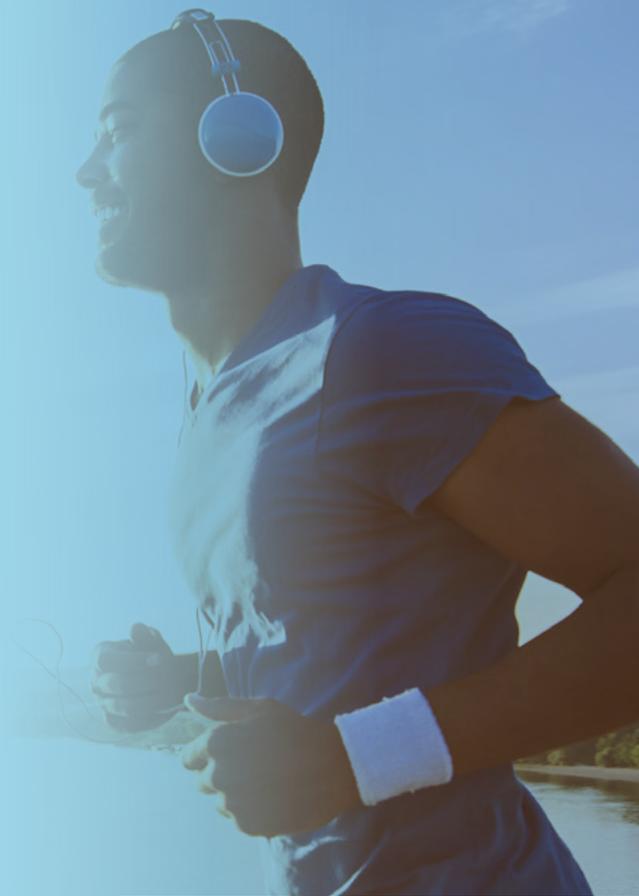
With entrant ecommerce discounters eating away at its market share, Infiniti Retail had to embrace the Indian retail sector’s digital revolution. It sought an innovative cloud services supplier with the vision and understanding to bring newfound business agility.

SOLUTION

Tata Communications provided a Managed Hosting Service complemented with an IZO™ Private Cloud to create a flexible hybrid cloud environment. Following a carefully planned, speedy transition, the company has found the pliable systems it strived for.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

The hybrid cloud architecture gives the company the ability to add or reduce compute capacity when the situation demands. Without a single instance of system failure, confidence in the IT team has grown, while the company has avoided the fate of less fleet-of-foot electronics retailers who’ve fallen by the wayside.



20% cost saving over competitors



2-night speedy transition



32 more productive hours per month



IT team hailed as business heroes

“From the viewpoint of technology, ability to execute and commercial terms, no other firm could bring such a strong mix to the table.”

**RANJIT SATYANATH
HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY, INFINITI RETAIL GROUP**

ABOUT INFINITI RETAIL GROUP

Headquartered in Mumbai, Infiniti Retail Group operates a chain of 107 Croma stores in two formats, Megastores and ZIP stores, selling multi-brand electronics across 16 large Indian cities. They’re also to be found at major airports in India. In addition, its e-commerce website lists over 2,500 products in five lead segments – home appliances, entertainment, IT products, digital imaging and communication.

For more information go to www.croma.com

WRESTLING WITH THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Infiniti Retail Group used to rely on an IT services company to host its enterprise applications but, when that contract came to an end, it went looking for a specialist hosting service provider with an innovative mindset for new levels of agility and availability.

With ecommerce firms offering deep discounts to boost sales, the business scenario couldn't have been more challenging. Ranjit Satyanath, Head of Technology, says: "The digital revolution was fast approaching the retail sector and we needed a supplier with the vision and ability to scale with us. The option of not doing anything would have been catastrophic."

COMING TO A COMMERCIAL UNDERSTANDING

Seeking a partner with a proven hosting service track record, when Infiniti Retail met Tata Communications it immediately felt comfortable with what was proposed.

"From the viewpoint of technology, ability to execute and commercial terms, no other firm could bring such a strong mix to the table," says Ranjit. "The pre-sales team engaged with us in a very collaborative manner and gave us a range of options on everything. The people and expertise they brought to bear made their proposition stand out from the rest."

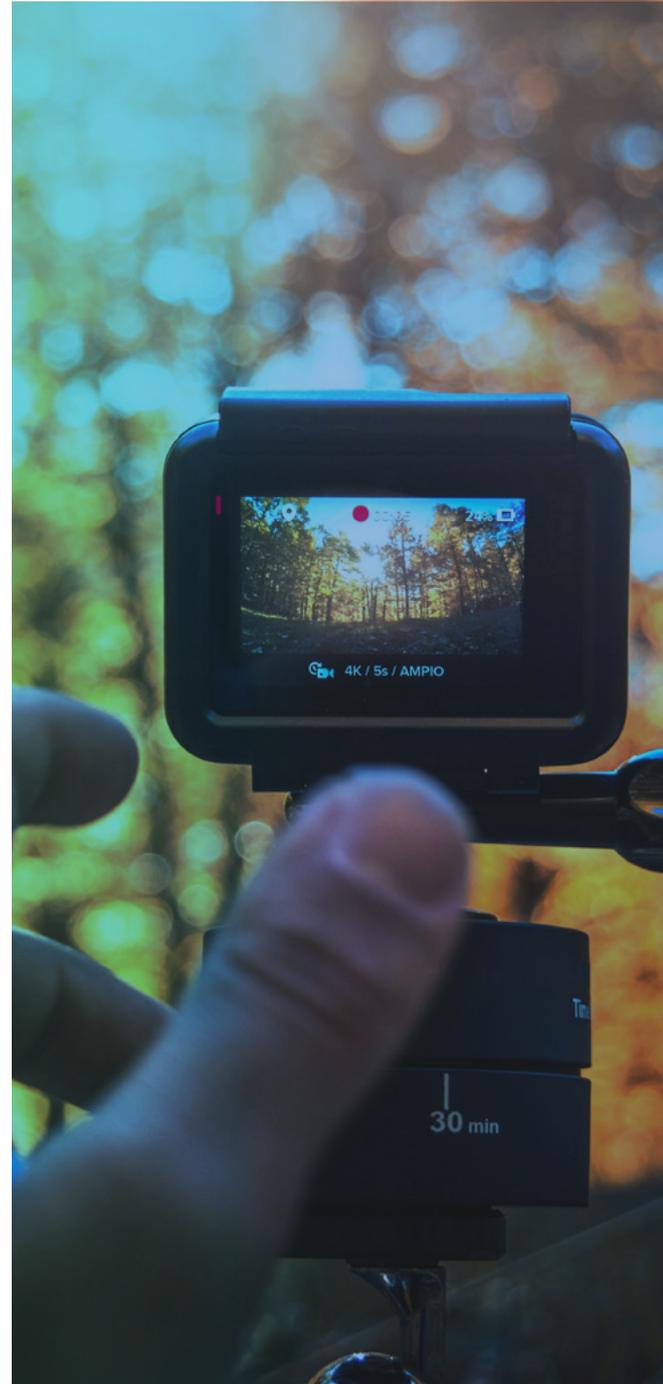
Tata Communications proposed its Managed Hosting Service across dual data centres: primary in Hyderabad and hot-standby DR in Mumbai. They would be connected by dual Global Dedicated Ethernet (GDE) links running at 100Mbps, while an MPLS-based Global VPN would interconnect stores with each other and with the data centres.

The commercial terms offered by Tata Communications were another differentiating factor, offering savings of at least 20 per cent compared to competitors. Meanwhile, moving to a fixed-rate OpEx model saved a capital expenditure fortune.

SINGLE PARTNER MEANS SIMPLE MANAGEMENT

Infiniti Retail had already been using a Tata Communications Global VPN solution but along the way in certain geographies it had tried out other network partners. "We found the quality of service offered by Tata Communications way better than others," says Ranjit. "Now they have first right of refusal on network services whenever we open a new store."

One of the strongest features has been Tata Communications' network monitoring. "The biggest advantage of having a single partner is that manageability is simpler," Ranjit adds. "Tata Communications has a perfect understanding of how we want to steer the business and they work with us in getting there."



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PRECISE PLANNING PAID OFF

The cloud transition project was jointly planned between Tata Communications and Infiniti Retail, with a parallel environment created in the Tata Communications data centres using the same virtualisation platform as previously. That set up was exhaustively tested by Tata Communications before moving it to an Infiniti Retail test and development environment, where it underwent three days of user acceptance testing.

The complex migration task from the previous supplier's hosting service to the Tata Communications cloud was next. Grouping applications by low, medium and high criticality, the least important were migrated first to prove the methodology and mitigate business risk.

"The data centre migration project had to be completed one week before our biggest sales period. Pushing that date back was not an option, yet any glitch would have been disastrous," says Ranjit. "Precise planning and execution by the joint Infiniti Retail and Tata Communications team ensured that IT was able to keep its promise to the business. All hardware and software components were migrated with no problems."

That entire process was achieved across two consecutive weekday nights, outside business hours, to avoid business disruption. Ranjit continues: "Not once did the words out-of-scope, a phrase dreaded by customers, crop up. Project management was exceptional. Everything that needed to be done got done."

PERFECTING THINGS POST-MIGRATION

Following the migration Tata Communications adopted a three-phase approach to perfecting the Infiniti Retail infrastructure:

- Stabilisation – compiling an inventory of IT assets, identifying those at end of life and/or out of support, and producing a low-level future design.
- Streamlining – matching applications against resources to ensure the most important customer and business-affecting functions get priority treatment; for example, applying high availability design principles to the most business-critical.
- Optimising – moving non-core infrastructure functions into the Tata Communications IZO™ Private Cloud for cost savings.

"Some time after the system stabilised we started fine-tuning the solution, adding things like better backup, DDoS protection and faster storage," explains Ranjit. "But the most profound change was moving non-core software instances onto IZO™ Private Cloud."

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HYBRID ENVIRONMENT OFFERS AGILITY ADVANTAGES

Providing the chance to create a hybrid environment for flexibility and control under the same support umbrella as the Managed Hosting Service, Tata Communications IZO™ Private Cloud offers Infiniti Retail greater cost effectiveness and near-limitless scalability.

“When our business transaction volumes started to go through the roof, we realised keeping all applications on the same infrastructure inhibited growth,” says Ranjit. “So, we leveraged IZO™ Private Cloud, which gave us a huge performance advantage at low incremental cost.”

For example, Infiniti Retail can use IZO™ Private Cloud for pilots and upgrades, without impacting core systems. This means quick and cost-effective responses to changes like the Indian Goods and Services Tax.

SOARING CONFIDENCE IN SYSTEMS

Several times a year, Infiniti Retail has business peaks during which a large part of its revenue is generated. “These periods were fraught with tension,” says Ranjit. “Business teams had contingency plans in case something failed, because confidence in our systems was so low.”

Now the new hybrid cloud architecture gives the company the flexibility to add or reduce compute capacity when the situation demands. Ranjit continues: “Since migrating to Tata Communications, we’ve never had a single instance of system failure. Our business sees that as one of the most significant achievements of today’s IT team.”

Before moving to Tata Communications, Infiniti Retail had one night of systems downtime for a cold backup every week. “The new solution eliminated that, which gives us 32 hours of additional IT team productivity every month,” says Ranjit. “That helps maintain a lean team focused on business transformation projects.”

Finally, Infiniti Retail has been very impressed by the high level of support from the Tata Communications team and its technical account manager (TAM) in the Global Service Management Centre. “The TAM takes away most of the pressure from our end and works like one of our own team members embedded within Tata Communications,” Ranjit concludes.

ABOUT MANAGED HOSTING SERVICE AND IZO™ PRIVATE CLOUD

Encompassing both physical and virtual computing, the Tata Communications cloud portfolio is transformation-ready and future-proof. Any company can use it to build a bespoke, fully managed cloud environment for on-demand scalability.

Managed Hosting Services can be tailored to meet exact needs, whatever an organisation’s size, infrastructure, or growth ambitions. Infrastructures are hosted in state-of-the-art data centres built to TIA 942 Tier-3 standards for enhanced performance and reliability. Tata Communications takes care of everything to ensure smooth, always-successful hosting. The managed services operations centre (MSOC) offers 24/7/365 support, while delivery and management processes adhere to ITIL service delivery guidelines.

Find out more at <https://www.tatacommunications.com/services/cloud/infrastructure/hosting>

IZO™ Private Cloud is the hybrid platform needed for borderless growth in today’s digital world. The service helps transform the infrastructure to grow business across the globe, scale resources up and down, and only use them when needed. Integration and control of distributed IT environments uses a single orchestration platform with 24/7 support backed by SLAs. An open and flexible approach gives choice of hypervisors, operating systems and storage.

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