

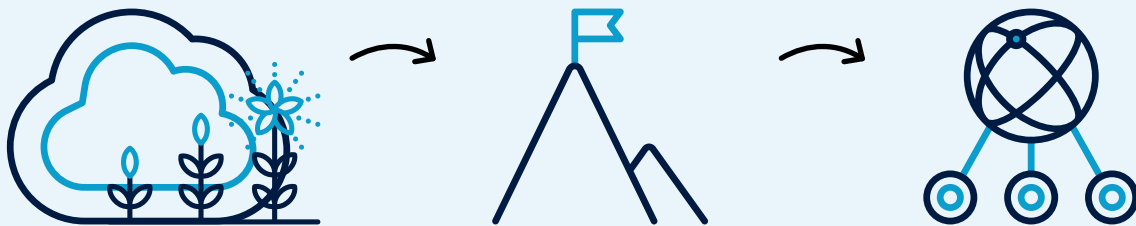
Success Story

Max Communications scales digitisation to accelerate growth

The IONOS Cloud has provided Max Communications, a digital transformation specialist, with a flexible and scalable cloud environment, enabling it to get ahead of stunning business growth and better support customers' digital ambitions.

+++ Featured learnings +++

- Cloud outperforms bare-metal servers from an operational point of view, driving business growth by enabling environments to be spun up and down in real-time.
- Liberating server teams from managing infrastructure means they can be redeployed to innovation, generating value for the business and improving their skills.
- The IONOS Cloud's Data Center Designer allows users to specify which European data centre their data should be hosted in, boosting compliance with local data privacy laws.



Max Communications is a leader in Digital Transformation for the UK in the Heritage Sector. Taking physical materials – anything from artworks by the old masters and historically significant documents, to Betamax videos and audio cassette tapes – they digitise, digitalise and transform them to “preserve the past for the future”. Its clients include some of the world’s most prestigious galleries, museums, media organisations and blue-chip companies. Each one trusts it to deliver excellent digitisation services, based on leading and innovative solutions. That includes the IONOS Cloud, which provides a flexible, scalable and well-supported technology platform to underpin the new processes and business models its customers hope to unlock through digital transformation.

The challenge

Working at the speed of customers

Digital transformation gets discussed a lot, but there are not many businesses for whom it has a more literal meaning than Max Communications. And yet digitising items or artifacts is only half the story, with it also being possible to generate a tremendous amount of additional value around organising the associated data and making it accessible.

As the company's Director of IT, Ralph Barrozo, explained: "Once material is in a digital format, we transform it into digital archival formats and other formats that make it easily catalogued and searchable. This could be a map or picture's origins, the locations of people depicted, its time period, the artist, etc. – that data allows organisations to be more efficient, to make their collections more open and to build new business models and processes." Examples of this include digitising historic maps and photography collections and selling prints online, or making old texts and documents machine-readable so they can be searched and copied by students or researchers.

"In that sense what we do is true digital transformation," said Ralph.

These services mean handling a massive amount of data and ensuring it is available on-demand for clients' applications and websites. As Max Communications embarked on a period of significant growth, scaling from niche concern to enterprise platform, the company's customer-facing IT environments – based at the time on bare metal servers in co-location environments – struggled to keep up.

"We couldn't quickly expand these servers to make upgrades or respond to performance issues because that meant configuring and ordering a new server and then migrating all the data over," said Ralph.

"The way we have been growing, that's not a sustainable operating model from a resource nor responsiveness point of view."



Ralph Barrozo
Director of IT, Max Communications

The solution

A true enterprise cloud

This prompted Ralph to explore the market for, in his words, a "true enterprise cloud solution, based on a cluster of servers that could scale and retract on-demand". This would enable Max Communications to spin-up, reconfigure and troubleshoot customer environments more quickly than they could using bare metal servers.

Ralph's procurement journey eventually produced a shortlist of three companies. And when it came time for each company to present their final proposal, there was only one thing on Ralph's mind.

“More than anything, even price, I wanted to know how quickly we could upgrade customer environments. Two of the final three vendors said they needed 24-48 hours – that’s not really cloud. But when IONOS demonstrated the IONOS Cloud and the Data Center Designer’s (DCD) graphical user interface (GUI) I was sold at that very moment.”

The IONOS Cloud is perfectly suited to Max Communications’ requirements around high availability and configurability of customer applications — even under peak demand. It also supports CPU-intensive rendering tasks being carried out cost-efficiently, with data archives and backups stored redundantly. Furthermore, transparent prices and maximum data privacy in certified data centres are complemented by the browser-based DCD, which provides all the tools needed to create and modify compute resources on demand.

The implementation

Seamlessly supported by the DCD’s GUI

After deciding to embark on the next chapter of its IT architecture with IONOS, it took just three months to migrate all of Max Communications’ data from the old bare metal servers. Ralph offered a simple description of his experience creating and maintaining customer environments: “easy”.

“Anyone familiar with workflow diagrams from applications like InVideo, VISEO or PowerPoint will recognise the DCD,” said Ralph. “I just drag a server, drop it into our workflow and there it is: a server provisioned in the cloud, in real time and without having to talk to anybody! And I have an easy-to-view snapshot of our entire environment and where all the connections go.”

For the rare instances when assistance is required, Ralph has found the style of service provided by the IONOS account management and technical teams

to be extremely refreshing. He said: “It couldn’t be more different from most cloud vendors where the first line of support would be a chatbot. Having highly knowledgeable people, who we know and have built relationships with, just on the other end of the phone provides a great deal of comfort.”

The DCD even allows users to specify which of IONOS’ European data centres they would like their data to be hosted in. For Max Communications, with its host of UK-based customers and its head offices in London, the ability to choose a London-based data centre was a welcome bonus from a data privacy and compliance point of view.

The Benefits

New servers provisioned in minutes – not days

Since migrating customer applications to the IONOS Cloud, Max Communications has increased the number of servers deployed by nearly 300%. That expansion translates into significant business growth, which continues to reach levels the company’s previous bare-metal IT strategy could not have hoped to sustain.

The company also slashed the time it takes to spin up new customer environments or make significant changes to existing ones from two days to 10 minutes.

“Our IT is now a direct enabler of growth, allowing us to provide a highly-responsive and reliable service to all of our customers no matter their size,” said Ralph. “Our team also no longer has to prioritise customer issues based on resourcing because of how quickly we can resolve issues in the IONOS platform.”

Interestingly, the team at Max Communications, relieved of much of their infrastructure concerns, has found more time to dedicate to innovation.

That includes building and training a custom AI model for transcribing audio data into text for its customers.

“Our customers can be very private, and they’d prefer their data to stay on our servers,” said Ralph. “So that freedom to be more creative and resourceful, instead of relying on third party solutions, generates a huge amount of value for the business. It means that not only is our IT environment better, but our people are, too, as they build new skills.”

Conclusion

The stage is set for further growth

Ralph acknowledges that the cost of the IONOS environment is higher than his previous bare metal solution, but stresses that the operational improvements are like comparing a couriers’ fleet of bicycles to a fleet of vehicles. “Bikes are cheaper – but they’re also slower and carry less,” he said. “With the equivalent now of a fleet of vehicles, we can cater to more customers simultaneously and without any meaningful increase in personnel costs.”

Looking to the future, Ralph expects the improved scale and responsiveness of Max Communications’ technology platform to propel it into new markets and territories outside the UK’s heritage sector.

“It’s amazing how much new value and innovation can come from the historical data we help clients to digitise and preserve,” he said. “Going forward, the IONOS Cloud will be the stage on which our applications can shine and reach a bigger audience, allowing more customers in more places to fully leverage the benefits of digital transformation.”

About IONOS

IONOS cloud is the European cloud alternative from IONOS, the leading European provider of cloud infrastructure, cloud solutions and hosting services.

Our product portfolio includes Compute Engine, an IaaS compute engine with its own virtualized code stack; Managed Kubernetes for container applications; a private cloud powered by VMware; and S3 object storage. Our solutions provide established medium-sized and large companies, regulated industries, the digital economy and the public sector with all the services they need to be successful in and with the cloud.

We are convinced that data sovereignty is essential for successful digitisation. That's why we are committed to ensuring that our customers retain control over their data and applications. As a German company, we offer full GDPR compliance, and thus maximum protection against access based on the US CLOUD Act.

Treating our customers fairly is very important to us, so we offer transparent pricing and by-the-minute billing, no vendor lock-ins and the best price/performance ratio in the IaaS market. Ease of use is another priority, so we provide highly flexible solutions and easy, drag and drop configuration through our patented Data Center Designer and APIs.

We also attach great importance to customer needs. Dedicated account management, tailored cloud architecture consulting – including support with proof of concept by professional services – and free 24/7 enterprise-level support with certified system administrators are available to help users in any situation.

Our history

For over 30 years, IONOS has been developing innovative, reliable and high-quality solutions that help companies of all sizes to digitise their business processes.

These include web hosting products and office applications, proprietary data centres and innovative cloud solutions. In addition, we have continuously enhanced our portfolio through strategic acquisitions.

Since its foundation in 1988, IONOS (formerly 1&1) has become Europe's largest hosting provider. In 2010, Achim Weiß, the current CEO of IONOS, founded an IaaS provider, which is now the basis for IONOS cloud. With 8 million customer contracts and georedundant data centres in Germany, Europe and the USA, we provide intelligently coordinated products for every phase of a company's development.

IONOS cloud is a sub-brand of IONOS, a United Internet AG company.

More information is available at www.cloud.ionos.co.uk.



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