Qmulus Solutions maximises reliability and minimises costs by migrating Sage applications to the IONOS Cloud

Companies turn to Qmulus for help migrating on-premises accounting software to the IONOS cloud, generating an estimated 33% savings vs similar hyperscaler solutions.

Featured learnings

- ✓ IONOS Cloud Cubes can be used to host virtual desktops, as well as test and development environments.

- ✓ The IONOS Data Center Designer greatly simplifies the configuration of new services, making it easy to visualise how clients and servers connect to each other.

- ✓ Qmulus estimates that its IONOS services cost a third of the price of other hyperscale cloud service providers, with no compromise on quality or reliability.

Many companies that have heavily invested in on-premises software now face the challenge of making it available for remote workers. Qmulus Solutions - in conjunction with Sage and IONOS – provides support and management services to help these companies migrate their on-premise Sage applications into the cloud. The company estimates that its chosen IONOS Cloud solution – IONOS Cloud Cubes – comes in at a third of the cost of the large hyperscale providers, while still providing the reliability and high-end customer service its customers need.

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The challenge

Moving on-premises software to the cloud

The benefits of the cloud are well-known, but for companies that have made a significant investment in on-premises software, it's hard to transition. Qmulus Solutions is a Sage Business Partner that, among other things, is helping customers to move their accounting packages online.

Daniel Lewis
Managing Director, Qmulus Solutions

"Historically, Sage applications have been very much on-premises client-server applications, where you install a piece of software on a server and then client devices access it," said Daniel Lewis, Managing Director, Qmulus Solutions. "Customers have been using those on-premises applications for ten, twenty, even thirty years now. However, people increasingly want to access information from home or remotely when away from the office. That's been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and customers are looking for long-term solutions, like hosting of applications in the cloud."

There are two strategies companies can adopt. The first is to migrate to a cloud-native application, but this is unattractive to companies that don't want to write off their previous investment. "The second option is to continue using the big investment they made in buying on-premises software, but lift that application and load it into a cloud-based platform," said Lewis.

Qmulus helps by hosting on-premises Sage software in the cloud. These applications are mainly Sage 50 (accounting software for small and medium-sized businesses), Sage 200 (accounting software for larger companies), and Sage CRM (for customer relationship management). While Qmulus has offered CRM hosting for ten years, Sage 200 hosting has only been offered for two years, and has seen increased growth as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sage hosting is only part of the Qmulus portfolio. The company conducts business analysis and provides technical solutions for its clients' needs. These solutions are often focused on the front office sales, marketing, and service areas, and include remote desktop hosting.

Qmulus targets UK companies with a turnover between £2 million and £50 million. Many of those companies are in the healthcare, construction, and field-based services markets. For most of them, the business applications that Qmulus looks after are business-critical.

Qmulus needed a hosting partner that would offer the high reliability and scalability its customers' requirements demand. At the same time, the hosting needed to be cost-effective. "Our customers may be paying thousands of pounds for software a month, or have bought it outright for a few thousand pounds," said Lewis. "For us to then say we'd charge them £500 a month to lift it into the cloud would be cost prohibitive. One of our main aims is to reduce cost to the customer. We don't see cloud hosting as a profit-generating part of our business."

The solution

IONOS provides reliable cloud hosting

Qmulus is working with Sage to deploy Sage applications in the IONOS Cloud using two different solutions. The Sage applications are hosted on IONOS Cloud, an enterprise solution that provides the reliability and scalability the company needs. Meanwhile, IONOS Cloud Cubes provide enterprise-grade virtual private servers, ideal for creating short-lived test instances.

"The IONOS Cloud Cubes platform allows us to spin up the suitable level of server within a few minutes, so we can quickly test upgrades of software, new versions, and new developments," said Lewis. "We typically only need these instances for a short time, and they can be fired up and down very quickly."

Qmulus also uses IONOS Cloud Cubes for remote desktop hosting. "In a live environment, the user desktop client is the least important part of the process, because we can easily fire up another instance of a client on a Cube server," said Lewis. "There's no data held on the client, so we don't need the resilience of a traditional

server. While we use an IONOS Cloud server for hosting the Sage 200 or Sage 50 application, IONOS Cloud Cubes give us a lower-cost way to provision the clients, with roughly the same performance."

For some companies, Qmulus also hosts CRM software in Cloud Cubes. Storage-wise, IONOS Cloud Cubes include an attached NVMe volume, which can be expanded with HDD or SSD network block storage, as required. The NVMe volume is backed up every 24 hours by IONOS for free. "This enables a very quick disaster restore time," said Lewis. "We can spin up sites and have them live within the hour. At the same time, the price is reduced dramatically because we're using a shared resource."

Lewis estimates that hosting with IONOS Cloud costs a third of the price of hyperscale cloud providers. "The cost savings allow us to provide application hosting at a much lower price point than a lot of other providers," he said. "When we're doing testing and development, we don't charge the customer for hosting because it's so cheap. We can resell the hosting to our customers that are used to spending thousands, rather than tens of thousands of pounds, and that don't want to double their cost just to go into the cloud. At the same time, we can give our customers confidence in the resilience and restore capabilities of the platform."

"Not every customer that we host on IONOS is our direct customer," said Lewis. "Some of them are provisioned for other Sage business partners that use us to host their applications. We've become a managed service provider to them, so the reliability of our cloud provider is vital for our reputation."

The implementation

Speedy deployment, friendly support

Qmulus uses server, instance, and network topology templates to set up customers' live sites within an hour. The IONOS Data Center Designer makes it easy for Qmulus to configure its data centre resources. "We can quickly design the structure of our servers, and the relationships between those servers and clients, in a browser," said Lewis. "And then we can provision that configuration within a few minutes. For other providers, we have to configure a server and then another

server, and then link those servers together. It's hard to understand the topology of the computers linking together."

So far, Qmulus has moved six of its customers to IONOS, with plans to move about 30 in total. The company was previously hosting with another provider. "The main reason for our migration to IONOS is to have one provider," said Lewis. "It will be much simpler than having to talk to different companies, depending on who the customer is. IONOS is that provider because we are seeing the benefits of being able to spin up the IONOS Cubes quickly, the Data Center Designer, and the Network Address Translation (NAT) gateway to enhance security."

Qmulus is carrying out the migration gradually, moving customers across as and when other work is carried out on their systems.

Qmulus turned to IONOS technical support for advice on securing the desktop clients. "We needed to be able to configure remote access to hosted desktop clients for users that could be at any location around the world, while still making sure that the security was in place to stop ransomware and other attacks," said Lewis. "IONOS technical experts helped us to use the NAT functionality to provide extra security for the client."

He added: "When seeking technical support from some companies, the response can be a lot more technical than the knowledge-level of the customer. IONOS has been very good at making sure the information that's coming back is in a format that can be understood by us."

Qmulus has regular communication with IONOS. "Our contact at IONOS is very good at contacting us once a month, if not more, just to see how we are and see what's happening," said Lewis. "We let him know when we are spinning up new servers, just to keep him up to date with what we are working on. If we need anything, we know he's there at the end of an email to answer any questions."

Conclusion

"Cost, configurability, and confidence"

"More and more customers and potential customers want to move their software into the cloud without having to buy new software," said Lewis. "But they want to adopt it in the best possible way for their business. That's not necessarily just lifting up what they've already got and placing it in the cloud. Sometimes, it involves a more creative solution that allows people to access their information on tablets, mobile phones, or maybe via browsers. We're working with IONOS to build on our pre-configured network topology templates, to see how we can extend them to offer better cloud-based solutions for our customers using their existing software."

When comparing IONOS to other hyperscale cloud providers, Qmulus chose IONOS because of the "cost, configurability, and confidence in the platform". Lewis said: "We generally describe IONOS as a low-cost, high-value provider. Obviously, IONOS is a well-known hosting provider. They're building a new data centre near us, which shows there is a big investment in the platform in the UK and there is confidence internally in the business. There is a large customer base that is confident in the business, too, because that's driving the need for more storage and more data centres. All this gives us confidence that we are choosing the right provider, rather than other providers at the same price point that might be a lot smaller and riskier."

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About IONOS

With over 8.5 million customer contracts, IONOS is a leading global provider of cloud infrastructure, cloud services, and hosting services.

Our product portfolio includes Compute Engine, an IaaS compute engine with its own virtualised 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 digitalisation. That's why we are committed to ensuring that our customers retain control over their data and applications.

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 digitalise 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 cloud.ionos.co.uk.

Call or email us to learn more!

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