CASE STUDY

Private to public cloud: global engineering design firm adopts IT strategy built for growth.

SOLUTION: IaaS, DRaaS

Khatib & Alami Offshore (K&A), one of the top 100 international design firms in the world, is very familiar with adopting technologies that make the biggest positive impact. Facing continued growth, the company's IT department set out to establish a robust infrastructure that ensured efficiency and protected the workloads associated with its clients' multi-billion dollar projects. Its technology journey has taken it from disparate IT islands to private cloud and, finally, to public cloud, which has delivered the most cost-effective, agile means to ensure rapid scalability and facilitate growth plans.

A Growing Organization

Originally established in 1964 as an architecture consultancy, K&A has grown to attain international status with operations in the Middle East, Africa, Western Europe, and North America. From the very beginning, the goal was to become a leading consultant in a number of disciplines and K&A has achieved that in the areas of architecture and engineering services; urban and regional planning; water and environmental engineering; transportation and traffic; industrial; power and electrical utilities; telecommunication; construction and project management; and Geographic Information Systems solutions.

K&A deems employees a key factor in its success and a major contributor to the uniqueness of its business. The caliber of engineers and other personnel employed by the organization, along with the expertise they bring to bear on multi-billion dollar projects, has helped K&A grow substantially in recent years. But K&A is also a pioneer in cutting-edge technology, embracing its most effective, relevant and beneficial advances to ensure improved services and results.

Since establishing its own computer center in 1979, K&A has made sure to stay at the forefront of technology. As the next stage in this highly successful company's IT strategy and led by Mohamed Saad, Corporate IT Manager at Khatib & Alami, K&A has adopted cloud as a competitive differentiator to maximize its leadership position.

CHALLENGES

- Ability to scale rapidly
- Protection of disparate workloads
- Minimize costs Management of cloud resources

SOLUTIONS

- [11:11] Cloud (IaaS)
- [11:11] DRaaS for Zerto

BENEFITS

- Easily add more resources when required
- Focus on core business strategies
- Fast recovery in the event of an outage
- Cost savings of 35-40%

PROFILE

- Size: Enterprise
- Industry: Consulting/ Architecture, Engineering and Construction (AEC)

THE RESILIENT
CLOUD PLATFORM

"[11:11] hosts all of our mission critical applications—financial systems, corporate email, databases, HR systems, project management systems, and more. That allows us to focus our IT efforts on activities that drive our business forward."

Mohamed Saad, Corporate IT Manager at Khatib & Alami

Business Challenges

Because the company manages complex, high dollar projects with aggressive deadlines, it is vital for K&A to ensure its mission critical systems, such as email and project management, are available and meeting performance and SLA targets.

To meet K&A's IT requirements, in 2008 Mr. Saad led a financial study project to determine the feasibility of opening a new and self-operated data center. As part of the study, K&A looked at multiple cloud vendors. At the time and for latency reasons, K&A wanted a cloud-based provider based in Europe because it was closer to the Middle East than the US. Financial reasons also made Europe the location of choice. K&A selected iland, now 11:11 Systems as its cloud provider. Mr. Saad comments, "We requested proposals from three or four different providers but the solution that [11:11] presented seemed more logical for our business and a much better fit for us than the others."

The Private Cloud Era

The results of the feasibility study favored a move to cloud and K&A opted for a private cloud using the organization's own equipment housed in a data center in Frankfurt that [11:11] used for colocation. Prior to the move, K&A's individual global offices existed as disparate IT islands and this new centralized cloud approach directly solved some of the challenges K&A faced when it came to protecting data and applications.

Mr. Saad notes, "It was a nightmare because every branch office had its own separate disaster recovery plan in place. We adopted private cloud to bring all these branches together and consolidate everything under one umbrella, where everybody could access the same systems using the same standards."

To optimally protect its virtual assets and workloads, K&A implemented a cloud-based disaster recovery plan with [11:11]. Should any type of disaster occur, K&A's private cloud hosted in Frankfurt would failover to [11:11]'s London data center.

The Public Cloud Era

K&A continued to run mission critical systems and data in a private cloud for several years and then began to look at the public cloud to house those applications. There were a number of reasons for this.

Mr. Saad explains, "First, the hardware was becoming too restrictive because we weren't able to scale up. We would have had to purchase more hardware and then deploy that and add more virtual servers with capacity for additional processing power. We would also have needed to employ the maintenance staff that went along with purchasing more hardware. Then we'd have to maintain all this equipment and any time something went wrong we'd have to deal with the suppliers, get the new equipment over to Frankfurt, and have somebody onsite be our hands and eyes to actually help replace the defective parts.

"All of those headaches and the fact that we needed rapid scalability because we are growing helped us come to the decision that having our own private cloud infrastructure was just too much of a hassle. And finally, for financial reasons, [11:11]'s public cloud was considerably more economical than using our own equipment. We're getting close to 35-40% cost savings with [11:11]'s cloud."

Why [11:11] Enterprise Cloud Services?

K&A again researched several vendors as they contemplated moving from a private to a public cloud. And although prices from each vendor were in the same ballpark, K&A had specific reasons for selecting [11:11].

"It was our working relationship that tipped the balance in [11:11]'s favor, as well as the tremendous support and rapport we have with [11:11]'s engineering and customer service teams," said Mr. Saad. "They understand our business."

K&A also selected [11:11] because of its Enterprise Cloud Services portal, the cloud management tool that gives Mr. Saad's team real-time visibility and transparency into their cloud, even enabling them to manage disaster recovery from the same interface. Mr. Saad says "We use the [11:11] ECS portal to manage our cloud resources. It is a very convenient and powerful tool that has enabled us to keep pace with our growing organization."

K&A's upward growth curve is the primary driver for moving its mission-critical systems to [11:11]'s public cloud. Previously when servers were needed to quickly deploy systems, none were available.

Using [11:11]'s Enterprise Cloud Services public cloud gives the company much greater flexibility and agility and relieves the burden of having to maintain its own equipment, the onus for which now rests on [11:11]'s shoulders. When Mr. Saad needs more resources today, he simply spins them up.

As is typical of so many organizations, K&A experimented with public cloud by starting with cloud-based disaster recovery to protect its private cloud workloads. Once the organization became comfortable with that and as it began to outgrow its private cloud, K&A sought a way to become more flexible and better able to meet its scalability needs.

Deploying [11:11]'s Enterprise Cloud Services has enabled it to quickly and easily deploy IT infrastructure as required. And [11:11]'s customer support has been there along the way to assist when needed.