
Aspidistra Software turns to private cloud to support Sage ecommerce and accounting software

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- Paul Dorey, owner of Aspidistra Software



iomart customer case study

iomart provides private cloud for Aspidistra Software

industry

Ecommerce

Objective

To allow Aspidistra's customers to consume resources without impacting on each other.

Solution

A private VMware cloud solution including DR and remote desktop

Benefits

- Scalable, cost effective solution
- Customers do not impact on each other
- Better control over allocation of web resources
- Honest relationship



Aspidistra Software produces a unique ecommerce system integrated to the Sage range of accounting and business management software in the UK. Based in Kingsbridge, South Devon, the business was founded by Paul and Karen Dorey in 1999.

In the early days the company delivered bespoke software systems that integrated to Sage 50 and produced a simple ecommerce system. But Aspidistra Software quickly realised that by combining the two and building an ecommerce system that expected to be connected to an accounting system it had a unique product which had advantages for many classes of business. So it expanded its range of products to integrate to Sage's mid-market and enterprise offerings Sage 200 and 1000.

Aspidistra Software has over 120 customers in the UK and Ireland and runs over 150 distinct websites delivered in a number of different languages for a diverse range of industries.



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Until 2011 Aspidistra leased a large server to provide shared hosting for its customers. However the business was growing quickly and needed a new solution that was more scalable and would allow different customers to consume more or less resources without impacting on each other.

Virtual Machines (VM) in a public cloud was selected as the technical solution and Aspidistra tested one VM from a shortlist of three suppliers. It installed its software, tested the performance and evaluated the support from each supplier. iomart came out top and an initial order was placed for 30 virtual machines.

Paul Dorey, co-owner of Aspidistra Software, explains, "Aspidistra wants to be in the software and services business and not the hardware and hosting business. Cloud services allow us to deliver specific capabilities to our clients with having to worry about the detail of their provision. We moved from the public to a private cloud because it is more cost effective and gives finer grained control on how we allocate resources. We no longer tell our customers how big the resources we allocate to them are, we just tell them it is enough!"

iomart supplies all Aspidistra's customer-facing hosting including cloud backup, disaster recovery and remote desktops. The company does use other suppliers but iomart represents 90% of its IT spend.

iomart supplies Aspidistra with a Private Cloud which consists of 3 hosts, a SAN and associated switches and firewalls in a highly available configuration and currently supports some 60 virtual machines. This will be shortly scaled by added another host. iomart provided technical services to specify the installation and then commissioned it and managed the transfer of VMs from the public to the new private cloud. iomart provides a high level of monitoring and a VIP service for day-to-day maintenance and configuration

Aspidistra has VPN directly to iomart and all the VMs exist in a trusted Windows domain so the company's employees can log on to them quickly and transfer files straight from their desk tops.

Paul Dorey adds, "Any minor issues are dealt with by emails to iomart and if there is anything urgent



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The relationship between Aspidistra and iomart is based on straight talking and a determination to provide the right technical advice and support. "Our initial contract with iomart was actually for a Zen Citrix cloud platform but a few weeks in it became apparent that there was an insoluble technical issue," says Paul. "Once it became clear that the manufacturer was not going to solve it in an appropriate timescale iomart moved quickly to migrate us to a VMware platform. I was very impressed with the professionalism and honesty in the way this was handled."

Aspidistra's customers range in scale from small companies with a few employees using Sage 50, to large groups of companies employing hundreds of people. Using a private cloud means Aspidistra can match the resources, and therefore the price of those resources, to the size of the customer it is dealing with.

Paul Dorey says, "There are many challenges involved in B2B ecommerce because of the complex pricing lists and discount schemes; the frequency and size of the orders and the stock needed to fulfil them; plus the ability to sell 'on account' up to credit limits. Most of this information is already in the Sage systems and through our Aspidistra Shopfront software we make this seamlessly available to their account customers through their websites. It is vital that the hosting that underpins this is as effortless as possible and that's what we achieve with iomart."

Aspidistra Software has grown into a £0.5 million turnover company in the last three years and expects to reach £1 million within the next three. It expects to scale its investment with iomart to match that growth as it expands its range to other Sage products both in the UK and internationally.

www.aspidistra.com