Reduced latency and operational costs

Tech teams that speak the same language

Self-service capabilities to support internal XaaS for a highly variable-project company

Complete certification, support and diligence to manage an elaborate VMware estate

It is a Cloud-First World for Construction Company Stefanutti Stocks

Stefanutti Stocks is effectively a large global cloud-driven enterprise with an as-a-Service IT department providing services to its conglomerate of multiple business units that manage numerous projects concurrently, many of which are hosted on untouchable systems. No stranger to the cloud, Stefanutti Stocks made a bold move into the VMware cloud in 2015, the challenge however was that it was all hosted in Europe. After identifying the need to bring its cloud closer to its physical geography, the Stefanutti IT team set out to find a local VMware Cloud Verified partner.

Early Cloud Adopter

Stefanutti Stocks is a major listed player in the South African and Sub-Saharan African construction market. It employs 7,500 people and earns over R5 billion in annual revenue from projects worldwide, from Cape Town to Dubai. Running hundreds of projects simultaneously, ranging from small operations to sites with hundreds of engineers, while Stefanutti is a conglomerate of many different projects it runs its head office operations and systems not dissimilarly to an SME.

To service such broad needs, Stefanutti's IT department operates as a service provider to the business, says Kevin Wilson, General Manager of Group IT Services.

"Our IT group acts like a service provider, or a reseller, providing different services for around 16 companies and 200 to 300 projects at any given point. So, we have to be agile and efficient and ensure access to systems no matter where the construction crew lands," said Wilson.

CUSTOMER
Stefanutti Stocks Pty Limited

WEBSITE
https://stefanuttistocks.com/

INDUSTRY
Construction

LOCATION
Global, HQ in Johannesburg, South Africa

KEY CHALLENGES
- Balance legacy applications with internal self-service XaaS delivery model
- Reduce network latency and operational costs
- Find a local partner to handle cloud architecture and services

SOLUTION
Collaborated with Routed, a fully certified VMware Cloud Provider with a complete VMware Cloud Director stack. Routed helped migrate a combined modern and legacy environment from European servers onto South African servers and offer continued support for Stefanutti's permanent legacy applications and agile XaaS delivery environment.

VMWARE FOOTPRINT
- VMware Cloud Director
- VMware Cloud Director Availability
- Full-stack VMware certification

PLATFORM
VMware Cloud

PARTNER
Routed

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Blending the old with the new

To facilitate such a rich mixture of projects under the roof of an enterprise, Stefanutti began leveraging the cloud several years ago, explicitly using VMware and its vCloud Air solution hosted in datacentres in Europe. The arrangement enabled it to run legacy applications that cannot be ported or modernised without significant expense but that it has previously run on an on-premises VMware solution. By "sticking to VMware" it could manage a virtual lift-and-shift migration into the cloud, and then deploy more modern cloud services to enable other technology services.

But hosting its workloads in Europe presented some challenges, particularly cost and latency concerns. Latency was such an issue that Stefanutti invested in network acceleration equipment and even established its own interconnect site - one of the first in South Africa. Business departments added to the pressure, demanding faster application performance but maintaining the construction industry's reputation for being gun-shy with technology investment.

Wilson and his team kept evaluating local providers for an alternative but were either faced with a lack of skills or certification, and high costs associated with modifying and running legacy applications in public hyperscale environments. Its requirements were clear. It wanted its systems hosted on a VMware cloud, run locally with a local provider, and that would support its IT-as-a-Service model.

"We wanted a partner that could emulate what we had (our systems in the cloud) that could take ownership of our cloud architecture and just get on with it. I don't want to build my own cloud architecture, nor do I want to know how providers will keep my environment up and running, I just want it to work. As a long-term user of VMware, both on-premises and in the cloud, I know that it is the best solution for this approach because ultimately, your application doesn't know where it is, it's highly available, properly backed up, and lives in the cloud," mentioned Wilson.

Routed to a better place

Following VMware's sale of its vCloud Air data centres to OVH, Stefanutti kept its environment with the partner – but an opportunity presented itself in that VMware was extending its cloud into a cloud partner programme via its VMware Cloud Verified partners. This meant it could find a local provider that met its expectations around compatibility, certification, peripheral services, and professionalism. And as it happens, Stefanutti knew what questions to ask.

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KEVIN WILSON,
GENERAL MANAGER
OF GROUP IT SERVICES

"You may recall that at some point the vCloud Air datacentres were sold to OVH in Europe, so we moved to their servers," said Wilson. "We moved our virtual datacentres in a weekend, which was tough and a great learning experience. So, when we looked at migrating to a South African provider, we knew what a migration would involve and were prepared for it."

The quest for such a provider eventually led Stefanutti to Routed. A VMware Cloud Verified, and VMware Principal Partner, Routed is a local cloud operator that provides the full VMware Cloud experience to organisations in South Africa. After some evaluation, Stefanutti knew it had found the right provider, not only in technical qualifications but also with professional synergy.

"The alignment was great. When plugging my technical team into the Routed technical team, there wasn't even a (technical) language difference. It was just a seamless conversation about the whole project and one they just understood straight away," added Wilson.

"Stefanutti are such a unique client. While they are a construction business as heart, they are also in theory a cloud service provider where IT provides services to the business units on demand," stated Andrew Cruise, Managing Director, Routed. "Our teams work exceptionally well together and are technically in sync at any given point. They were always looking for a partner that could support their journey and not just push services at them. So, by providing Stefanutti with full self-service access and control with support and in addition, aggregating our knowledge when they need it – we make a great team."

Everything in one place

Stefanutti's requirements don't fit neatly into a conventional case study. The team knew what they needed, knew what it wanted to do, and were very clear on what they wanted from the change to a local provider. The missing link was the service provider – which is where Routed came in.

As expected, the move to local data centres vastly reduced Stefanutti's latency issues, which had previously caused havoc with sensitive legacy applications. It also led to much lower costs. As an example, Stefanutti would spend considerable amounts on international bandwidth and overtime support costs from its previous service provider, to maintain its environment. While the company had used a local cloud data centre provider prior to adopting VMware vCloud Air, it found itself locked in with little flexibility and few options - a nightmare for anyone running services for hundreds of projects in different locations.

Crucially, the complete and certified stack at Routed delivered a more reliable and predictable migration, and Routed's full-stack VMware Cloud Director enabled features Stefanutti needed for its IT-as-a-Service approach, such as a complete self-service experience using the UI and APIs.

"Routed ticked all the boxes and they don't pay lip service to their VMware environment, they make sure things are maintained, up-to-date and working. Their positive attitude has a lot to do with the fact that they were the first company to offer this level of VMware Cloud in the region and were hungry for new business. It was the perfect marriage," added Wilson.

Stefanutti and Routed accomplished something not often achieved in today's cloud-first obsessed market. The seamless and speedy completion of a lift-and-shift of legacy systems from one cloud environment to another, this included the migration of all the companies "moving parts" as well as third party applications and software such as Veeam etc.

Looking ahead

"Our industry hasn't changed in centuries, we are still laying bricks and building buildings. That said a lot of our systems are older as are the applications we use because change is slow in this industry. Looking ahead we are tinkering with new systems and solutions and hoping to build applications that support our IT-as-a-Service model. At Stefanutti we rip out 60% of our networks every year because projects conclude, and sites change. This needs a high degree of agility, reinforced by 4IR elements, a capacity we have been building for years on VMware environments," mentioned Wilson.