

## Blog Post

# The always-on world: the true power of multiple clouds

Business agility and availability to become a hot focus for 2017

### Executive summary

A senior technology executive talks about how 24/7/365 data and service availability is the new normal, and that any provider that falls short of it will fail.

### Client:

Zeno Group

### Content type:

Thought leadership piece

### Brief:

To ghost write a blog post by a technology executive about how data availability is becoming the new normal in data services and platforms.

### Deliverable:

A written piece of no fixed word count on the trends emerging that will impact data availability today and in the future.

**In case you hadn't noticed**, the cloud is well and truly mature, handling more of our transactions, posts and online activity than mainframe or PC eras ever did. But if 2017's taught us anything, putting data and processing in the cloud is only half the story. In increasing frequency, we're going to be talking about availability.

Three destructive hurricanes have blown through the continental US and its offshore territories in as many months, laying waste to homes, business and lives, affecting critical data storage just as much as they have every other aspect of life.

Then one of the most respected credit reporting agencies – holding the sensitive data of millions of consumers – fell victim to a very embarrassing cyberattack. And that's even without the countless victims of ransomware, who Google estimate paid in excess of \$25m to cybercriminals over the last two years. How do we navigate data security and availability when so much can go wrong?

Availability is going to be the data security science of the next decade, and when even bureaucrats like the EU know how important it is (thanks to formal measures like the General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR), you know it's no longer an option.

It's not just about cloud. Today, the precise combination of several (sometimes many) cloud services, is our best defense in the always-on world.

### The Always On World

The past year has thrown a spotlight on the importance of availability – both of services and data. From the Australian census debacles through to a number of high-profile systems outages across the globe (think travel!), the public has come to understand the importance of having access to accurate information and critical services on-demand.

As we move into 2017, businesses will increasingly need to embrace customer expectations and ensure seamless delivery of services. From an IT perspective, there are four key trends that businesses will need to embrace in order to exceed the expectations of customers and partners alike:

### *Blurring Lines between Public, Private and Hybrid Clouds*

A few years ago, the thought of extending data centre infrastructure to a hyper-public cloud may have seemed a futile endeavour of connectivity, security and a mix of unknown surprises. However, now the market is ready to accept the adoption of hybrid cloud architectures from both the infrastructure and application side. It's already happening and much greater mainstream adoption is on the horizon as enterprises look to enhance operational agility and reliability, while ensuring that data and applications are available at any time, from anywhere

### *The explosion of the software-defined infrastructure*

It's no secret that the software-defined data centre has been a huge trend in recent years – thanks in part to the popularity of virtualisation. Running applications in a virtualised environment brings many advantages for companies to help build efficiencies, provide reliability and a flexible IT infrastructure to ease management and free time and resources. As businesses evolve, expect to see more demands on vendors to provide software and services to meet the expectations of the next generation of innovators.

### *Stay one step ahead of hackers*

Threats from hacking, as well as the proliferation of botnets, and malware (specifically ransomware) will keep IT managers up at night throughout 2017. We've seen enormous burdens placed on organisations looking to maintain availability during 2016, with large attacks on DNS services causing major companies and services to be unreachable during critical times.

As more businesses look to provide digital services, the hackers will be nipping at their heels. More than ever before, businesses will need to place additional emphasis on end-to-end data security, backup and recovery to ensure their services remain available for partners and customers.

### *More Data, More Possibilities*

The data centre of today, and definitely of tomorrow, will increasingly hold more data – both historical and mission-critical. Whether it be an influx of inputs from the Internet of Things, more complex business systems, or growing amounts of existing data sets, the conclusion is obvious: the data deluge will continue.

On the positive side, this will bring benefits to businesses looking to leverage advanced analytics to hone their existing operations and provide new services to customers.

As the calendar ticks over to 2017, businesses will be able to gain more insight from the data they have collected; helping shape decisions and inform business strategies. However, these analytic capabilities will only bear fruit if data is both available and robust.

For businesses relying on advanced analytics to drive operations, any downtime not only halts the ability to transact with customers and suppliers, but also stymies informed decision-making. Businesses will need to direct their attention to maintaining availability of mission-critical systems that underpin their analytics.

### **The Availability Lodestone**

What if a cyclone or storm, distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack or other major breach and then a catastrophic regional power failure all strike at once? Customers and users the world over don't care what your problems are – they expect the information and ability to transact to be there when they want it, and it's frighteningly easy to move from you to your competitor if you don't offer it.

We haven't even scratched the surface of the technologies that will change cloud computing. AI and machine learning is already weighing on marketing and sales by synthesising Big Data and analytics. Soon it will be responsible for hopping spontaneously between clouds to ensure the continued delivery of your data or service.

But availability is about much more than consumers and ecommerce. Far-flung colleagues, more automation and the new flexibility they enable will further change the world we work in, and we already expect our work assets and services to be 24/7 like we are.

The more we put online, the more we have to protect and ensure it. Availability isn't a choice, and the time is now.

Specific predictions are always challenging, but the technology landscape today provides endless possibilities for organisations to provide great services based on the data centre and the information a data centre both houses and delivers. The expectation is that data is available on-demand. Gone are the days where downtime is considered a 'normal' part of doing business.

In 2017, the data centre will take centre stage and will serve as a critical piece of infrastructure to both store information and provide services to customers, employees and partners alike. Having a plan to ensure availability will be vital to maintaining business operations to meet – and exceed – expectations. ■