




# PRIVATE CLOUD FIXES ACHILLES' HEEL

Professional services Cloud & managed services Datacentre Software licensing 

**Achilles is one of the world's leading managers of supplier information. Their range of web-based services identify, qualify, evaluate and monitor suppliers on behalf of buyers' organisations worldwide. Achilles builds unique communities spanning a wide range of industry sectors, so that organisations can manage their supply chains effectively, reduce risk and improve data quality and consistency.**

## The Challenge

Following successive outages of their legacy Microsoft Exchange email environment, Achilles decided that they could no longer tolerate the lost productivity this resulted in. Supporting 1600 mailboxes across the globe in 18 different locations, the business is fast paced and reliant on its IT systems to deliver services back to its own customers. The impacts of the outages were starting to impinge on the delivery of those services.

David Harris, Infrastructure Manager at Achilles explains, "The email system was based on Exchange 2003, which is really a legacy platform now, and the infrastructure it was operating on was pretty old too. The outages we were experiencing were starting to become a recurring problem and whilst each time we fixed things, it simply felt like a sticking plaster and that something more catastrophic could be just round the corner."

Achilles had partnered with Softcat for some time so naturally consulted with them on what the options might be for upgrading the environment. Whilst simply migrating to newer systems was the obvious answer, Achilles really wanted to devolve the day-to-day responsibility for the new environment as well. David Harris says, "Having had so much time wrapped up in maintaining the previous system, I felt we really needed to pass-on the responsibility altogether for managing the new system. We'd successfully worked with other third parties on things like cloud based spam and content filtering, so putting the hosting and management of the system into the cloud felt like a natural next step."

Leveraging the new capabilities of Microsoft Exchange 2010 was at the heart of Achilles' requirements. As such they set about evaluating a variety of options for a cloud solution, including Microsoft Office 365, but were put off by the limitations of a public cloud service. Specifically, Achilles wanted the reassurance that the new platform would integrate with their other core business systems, so flexibility to tailor and modify the service would be essential.

## The Solution

The service Softcat proposed would be delivered from their Tier 3 ISO270001 certified datacentre in London. Based on Microsoft Exchange 2010, the new email solution would be hosted on infrastructure built and provisioned exclusively for Achilles. Using a variety of world-class technologies including next generation HP server technology, the latest HP 3PAR storage, VMware virtual infrastructure, Cisco switching, Checkpoint security, Veeam enterprise management and F5 load balancing, a stable, robust and scalable foundation would be created for Achilles' current and future growth needs. Everything would then be managed 24x7x365 from Softcat's Network Operations Centre (NOC).

Due to the recurring outages experienced with the existing system, Achilles also wanted to make the switch to the new service a fast one. Nick Tritta, Technical Architect at Softcat takes up the story, "Whilst a 'big bang' switchover would be impractical, Achilles wanted to transition all of the users over to the new system as quickly as possible. We proposed this could be undertaken within 5 months following a staged process for planning, proof of concept, pilot and eventual full-scale implementation. Once in the implementation phase their 1600 mailboxes would be transitioned to the new system in small batches of up to 50, because of the size of the mailboxes being migrated."

The switch-over was delivered on time and to plan. Whilst not completely hitch-free the small challenges encountered were quickly dealt with by Softcat with minimal disruption to the Achilles operation. Nick Tritta remarks, "Achilles is a global, dynamic organisation so there was a greater potential for unforeseen problems. At times, we had to break from the original plan and come up with an alternative approach, however, we relish these sort of challenges and pride ourselves on our agility and flexibility to come up with answers quickly. For example, when we first went live, the virtual load balancer we were using wasn't delivering the performance we needed, so a swift change to a physical appliance put things right. It didn't take long and the swap made all the difference. Achilles was kept appraised at all times and understood what would happen at what time."

## The Benefits

Achilles now has a fully managed cloud-based email service. Day-to-day management is conducted by Softcat along with a 24x7x365 Service Desk support. The service is based on consumption of resources so as Achilles' needs change, more or less IT can be provisioned immediately, be that mailboxes, storage, security or anything else. Nick Tritta remarks, "Even since the service went live new users have been added to the system, which has resulted in the necessity for more compute resources to be given over to the Achilles private cloud. What's more, these resources can be spun up and deployed in minutes – something which previously would have taken Achilles considerably longer to do in-house."

David Harris concludes, "Softcat has been very responsive through the whole process and communication at every stage has been excellent. We're very impressed with the service and I don't believe we would be able to deliver the same SLA's ourselves. Now the burden of day-to-day management is Softcat's responsibility; my team have been freed to focus on more important projects for our business. In short it meets our needs perfectly and means we have a great foundation for the future."

## Key Facts

- One of the world's leading managers of supplier information
- 20 year heritage
- Working with over 700 of the world's largest companies
- Connecting with over 55,000 suppliers
- Responsible for 32 buyer and supplier communities worldwide across a range of industries

## Critical Success Factors

- Experienced third party to manage entire email infrastructure
- To be delivered as a cloud-based service
- Provide utmost flexibility to integrate with other core business systems
- To be delivered as quickly as possible