



# Hosted Microsoft Communications Services platform

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## About Quintica

Quintica operates throughout Africa and the Middle East combining specialist technology, best practice Service Management consulting, accredited training programs and hosted services that focus on how to support customers, save costs and optimise available cash.

The Quintica business pillars of People, Process, Product and Partners drive strategic and operational business improvements in Customer service, Cash optimisation and Cost reduction. Quintica recognises the value of combining "best practice" (ITIL®, CoBIT, ISO/IEC 20000, Six Sigma) service management solutions, consulting, education and managed services using a collaborative and consultative approach.



The Quintica Group combines a host of specialist ICT Solutions, "best practices" Service Management experts and access to industry leading techniques that aim to simplify business cost effectively. They operate throughout Africa and the Middle East, focusing on four areas, People, Process, Product and Partners that influence three strategic business improvement areas namely Customer, Cash and Costs, to drive greater business value through better management of technology and service processes. Quintica recognises the value of combining "best practice" (ITIL®, CoBIT, ISO/IEC 20000, Six Sigma) service management solutions, consulting, education and managed services using a collaborative and consultative approach.

Quintica has access to a wide array of specialist expertise and is a creator of innovative service management solutions and methodologies. In 2008 Quintica took the decision to step up its business activities in the East African country of Kenya, by introducing the first of what it intends to be a comprehensive range of managed ICT services targeted at businesses in this flourishing economy.

One of company's initial offerings in Africa is a hosted Microsoft Exchange communication platform, with many more services planned for the near future.

## Business Need

In an effort to step up business activities throughout Africa, approximately two years ago Quintica took the decision that the logical extension for the business was to simply deliver on the importance of high quality services. Hence the start of the "Fusion" journey into managed and hosted services. The core premise is to deliver Managed Services from Quintica's own infrastructure, based on best practice expertise applied by Managed Service providers around the world. The result is that clients can benefit from high-performance ITIL-aligned technology at a reduced cost and human overhead.

## Project Scope

To construct, within a limited timeframe, a managed data centre in Nairobi that would deploy the necessary infrastructure to commence operations quickly - this being a combination of high end data class application servers, enterprise class storage and utilising Microsoft's Hyper-V virtualisation platform for managing multiple virtual servers that deliver the complete communications service platform, in a multi-tenancy environment. The scope for the various phases are:

### Phase 1

Identify key vendors and products to utilise in offering best-of-breed hosted services. Selected key vendors and partners are DELL, EMC, CISCO, Microsoft, BMC and Symantec. Decided to implemented a full virtualised solution in order to maximise resource usage and application availability, and minimise capital expenditure. The virtualisation technology selected was Microsoft's Hyper-V to maximise compatibility with the selected Microsoft platform.

DELL were selected to provide all servers, KVM switches, racks. The selected storage solution was an EMC CX-4 CLARiiON FC storage array. The networking partner identified was CISCO, providing firewalls, switches and core switches.

On the software side, Quintica identified Microsoft as the key software vender on which to base the majority of its offerings and signed an HVS and SPLA agreement with Microsoft, allowing Quintica to offer the full suite of Microsoft services to the market. BMC will provide the Service Desk solution, Remedy for incident and change management. Symantec was selected as the partner for backup and vaulting services, as well as premium client security services.

Once the vendors were identified, it was then possible to architect and design the complete solution, and identifying required resources and skill sets, and implementation partners as required.

The final solution, designed to cater for 15,000 subscribers, consisted of 12 high-end physical servers hosting 41 virtual servers. The solution is fully redundant, and highly scalable, requiring no downtime to add servers to improve performance as more subscribers come online with expansion capable of catering for over a million subscribers.



### Summary

- Quintica makes available Microsoft solutions that business requires in order to improve their ability to operate in an increasingly competitive Kenyan and East African marketplace.
- The solutions offered from a hosted facility create a no CAPEX investment which financial controllers prefer.
- Quintica provides a complete solution from training, data migration and high availability of service, backed by disciplined process to ensure continual operation and protection of valuable data.
- Fusion from Quintica delivers world class solutions for companies that do not have or do not want the budget, time and technical skill set required to deploy top end Microsoft solutions.



### Phase 2

The initial solution implemented is Hosted Communication Services, utilising the Microsoft Hosted Messaging and Collaboration 4.5 solution framework, delivering hosted Exchange (email, calendaring, tasks and contacts), hosted SharePoint (document management, collaboration portal) and hosted Communication Services (instant messaging, Live Meeting, A/V Conferencing). Also implemented is our initial managed Service Desk solution based on BMC Remedy.

Due to the nature of the core services offered, Quintica will also offer several ancillary hosted services including domain registrations (international domains), security certificate procurement (SSL), domain name management and basic web hosting.

### Phase 3

Expansion and new services: hosted call centre and additional Microsoft based services, including Hosted Dynamics CRM, Archiving and Vaulting of email, and Managed Infrastructure based on Microsoft System Center technologies.

Part of the expansion will include the roll out of a new provisioning platform that will enable customers and resellers to directly manage their subscribed mailboxes and customers, without Quintica staff intervention.

Intellisite, smart location monitoring solutions will also be launched, utilising Quintica's operations center for monitoring all aspects of remote sites, from power to availability.

During this phase we will also be launching Backup-as-a-Service, using BackupAgent technology, allowing customers to backup their critical data to Quintica's secure storage.

### Phase 4+

Platform upgrade to Microsoft Office 2010, including Exchange 2010, SharePoint Server 2010, Communication Server 2010, ensuring Quintica's customers' are using the very latest and most advanced technology available for the delivery of new services.

### Project Objectives

- Offer customers a secure hosted solution at affordable prices with necessary security to ensure security of data and databases used.
- Add more cost effective solutions ensuring a unique and cost effective service offering.

### Solution

The main focus of the project was implementing a Microsoft Hosted Messaging and Collaboration 4.5 platform that would have an industry standard Outlook capability such as shared email, calendars, tasks etc while other components of the Microsoft communications platform would have Skype like applications such as voice video, normal chat sessions, audio/video conferencing, Live Meeting facilities all of which would operate within a controlled set and workflow activities that is both a secure and recorded environment. The same applies to email.

SharePoint services will allow people to store and share data while having the ability to carry out documentation management and workflow activities on a SharePoint environment that is secure.

Intellisite, which is an environment monitoring solution i.e. management data centre, network, access, temperature, humidity, etc. OR other infrastructure such as Telco towers, generators, and their settings i.e diesel usage etc.

### Project Approach

The project adopted a phased approach using preferred industry project methodologies to implement and manage the project plan. As an IT project there were strict timelines to managing each component that were integrated into one unit. Once the acceptance testing level was passed, the project moved into an ITIL Service Management environment which was used to manage the environment. (5 8 months)



### Learning Lessons

For the Quintica team it would have been useful to have spent another month understanding the environment as well as finding the correct mix of people to set up the project environment. Much effort and time would have been saved by fully understand the country rules, requirements and taxes.

High efficiency and productivity of the team was achieved by ensuring that all involved understood not only what to do but more importantly the urgency of why things needed to be done today and not tomorrow. A different approach to the project management had to be deployed with processes, methods and benefits having to be explained in detail.

Although there is ample scope and opportunity in Africa, any organisation seeking to explore business opportunities must take the required time to research and fully understand the market dynamics and differences in getting a product or software into these countries. This must be factored when defining project goals.



### Challenges

- One of the biggest challenges for any implementation team is getting to terms with the business, political and socio-economic environment of any foreign country prior to engagement within the respective country. Things are not always done the same way as back home and much time and effort would have been saved if the Quintica team had undertaken to fully understand how to set up in an environment such as Kenya. It is fundamentally necessary to understand the country's rules and regulations, especially when it comes to transporting required items into the country. The teams needed to be flexible and resilient when working with different cultures and different skills levels.
- A major challenge, which caused a considerable delay in the delivery of the project, was the in-effectiveness of vendor support in Kenya. Specifically dealing with hardware vendors and having them resolve a hardware defect, which should have typically taken days, ended up taking 6 weeks. This was primarily due to the hardware components required needed to be sourced from other countries and consolidated in South Africa, before being forwarded to Kenya. This was a real eye-opener in terms of the real support we can expect from vendors working in East Africa.
- South Africa, in many ways, offers a wide band of knowledge in comparison to Kenya that suggests a narrow but good quality of knowledge. Finding the correct level of experiences and knowledge for the various project levels posed a serious quandary. Quintica managed this challenge by employing a few expatriates to drive and train the Kenyan staff enabling them to take this project forward. The transfer of knowledge and skills by the team ran parallel with delivery and training with the hand on integration of Kenya staff as part of implementation team.

- Although an assessment of the target market was carried out on which this solution was built, penetration of this market proved difficult. This was a result of the markets historical experience of previous foreign companies that folded after 3 months. Hence the communities' scepticism that Quintica would follow. The Kenyans initial stance was to watch and observe the environment. They now believe that Quintica is both serious and committed to making a difference in the market.
- As with many African countries the political climate is volatile rendering uncertainty to effective business continuity.

### Benefits

#### For the Customer

The hosted solution implies no CAPEX outlay but rather OPEX monthly payments which would likely be the preferred route in Africa.

#### For Quintica

This first class solution environment enhanced existing team skills and experience to managed



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