

Case Study: enStratus

By Gillian Law 28 May 2012

Managing security in a hybrid cloud is a tricky business, and the bigger your organisation the more complex it becomes.

Back in 2007, enStratus was formed because its sister company, Valtira, was struggling with exactly that problem.

“Valtira is an online marketing software company, and it had started to move into web apps and cloud applications. Initially it was hosted on Amazon, then started looking at Rackspace - and quickly realised that there was an issue in managing all these different public clouds,” says George Hadjiyanis, vice president of sales and marketing at enStratus Networks.

In the end, Valtira developed its own solution. “And then some of our software clients and other enterprises came to us and said, ‘how are you doing that?’. We realised there was a market opportunity for a platform to manage multiple private and public clouds, with security, automation and a ‘single pane of glass’ looking at these clouds. So in 2008 we spun it off as a separate company called enStratus.”

Cloud providers focus on providing a service for their own direct clients, says

Hadjiyanis, and their priority has been developing the tools they need to manage that infrastructure.

“They don’t really focus - so far - on working with other cloud providers,” says Hadjiyanis. “And a lot has been focused on developers - but when enterprise started to move to cloud they had different concerns. They want different levels of access for different staff, over multiple clouds, private and public.”

enStratus’ management overlay allows multiple clouds to be managed as one. It can be tied into an organisation’s own directory services, managing access levels, logging and tracking use by each employee and allowing detailed billability according to use.

“You can just keep managing users as you typically would do internally,” says Hadjiyanis.

Using one management system also helps to prevent cloud sprawl - many organisations struggle to control the many instances and VMs that are sparked up for individual projects and then forgotten.

“One of the benefits of having cloud

capabilities is being able to do cloud provisioning, to launch a new VM to deploy an application - but the downside is, if you don't have controls around it, that can sit there for weeks and months," Hadjiyanis says.

Using enStratus software, enterprises can put tools in place to track spending, set limits and give warnings if cloud instances run too long.

"You can schedule a server to be terminated after a set amount of time, too," says Hadjiyanis. "If a training group wants a server up for just a set time, they can do that, and know it will be terminated at the end of that day."

Inevitably, unless a company has strict policies in place, different groups will use different suppliers. The larger the enterprise, the more likely it is that one division may be experimenting with Rackspace, while another is working with Amazon, and there's no way of knowing. Once those are both up and running, the company needs a way to manage both.

"There are also acquisitions, which bring together two companies and create a multi cloud environment," Hadjiyanis says.

enStratus offers a Software as a Service version of its software, plus an on-premise product.

"The SaaS product is an easy way to get started, especially around a public cloud," Hadjiyanis says.

"If you have an Amazon account, and you're a small to mid size company, typically you'll sign up online with us and then attach your Amazon account - and enStratus will autodiscover your architecture.

"But as you move to a larger organisation that has a private cloud component,

typically they want to manage it within their own four walls, so they can do deeper integration and have their own internal policies and procedures expanded into the cloud. That's when they'll go for on-premise - it doesn't really make sense to go out to a hosted service to come back and manage a private cloud."

enStratus also offers automated recovery - monitoring your applications and recognising if a cloud provider fails.

"If you have an automated application that needs a minimum of four servers, and then one of the cloud providers that you're managing goes down for whatever reason - and it does happen - then we would automatically start a new server and attach it to the deployment," Hadjiyanis says.

Minneapolis-based enStratus is in the process of establishing a UK office, in Edinburgh, to build its presence in the European market.

enStratus plans to create up to 30 highly-skilled jobs in Scotland by the end of 2014 and is currently recruiting key staff in preparation for its Edinburgh office opening later this year.

"We already have an office in New Zealand, focused around Asia Pacific and providing support for that region, and we wanted to expand into Europe. Initially it will provide development and support, and in future sales and marketing too.

enStratus was interested in the UK generally, and then "Scottish Development International made it very beneficial for us to have our headquarters in Edinburgh. There are some cloud organisations that we work with who are also based in Scotland, and the University of Edinburgh also has some great programmes, so it made sense to us," he says.



The Scottish Government, through Scottish Development International, gave enStratus a Regional Selective Assistance (RSA) grant totalling £240,000 to encourage it to invest in Scotland.

It is too early to tell what the market differences will be between Europe and the US, Hadjiyanis says, “but we do have a lot of interest from European companies - a lot of organisations are coming to this model.”

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