

Nominee: Africa Data Centres

Nomination title: The consolidation and expansion of The Africa Data Centres

In Feb 2017 The South Africa Data Centre (SADC) Johannesburg and SADC Cape Town were acquired by the East Africa Data Centre (EADC) in Nairobi.

The EADC is the only DC in East Africa to hold a Tier III certification from the Uptime Institute – and also operates the Central Africa Africa Data Centre in Harare.

In 2017 the four DCs were then consolidated into a single brand – the Africa Data Centres - with around US\$100 million invested in upgrading and expanding all four. In particular, The South Africa Data Centre (SADC) Johannesburg and SADC Cape Town doubled in size.

These four highly interconnected and carrier neutral data centres are enabling global cloud players to enter Africa, and enables African – and international - service providers and businesses of all sizes to keep their data safe and accessible.

What was the driving force behind the project – what business or technology challenge needed to be addressed?

Domestic and international businesses across Africa have embraced cloud-based services. However, until recently, if they wanted to access cloud services, they've mostly been accessing a data centre in Ireland or Europe or the US.

But they want and need local carrier-neutral, open-access data centre space for their business-critical data and applications. They expect the same quality as DCs found in developed markets.

Africa is also aspiring to have more data driven economies, which is spurring the local adoption of big data, analytics, e-government to transform the way that public sector services are delivered, along with digital transformation of African businesses.

How did the solution address the challenges and were there any particularly innovative aspects that made it stand out?

The ADCs are all carrier-neutral and interconnected by multiple networks which is unusual in Africa (only Teraco in South Africa is also neutral.)

ADC's multiple DCs mean that organizations can choose their preferred locations.

Innovation

In 2017 the EADC installed solar panels which now generate 73% of the electricity used on-site.

The latest technology has been installed to ensure power usage effectiveness at both data centres in South Africa.

What major challenges were faced during the project and how were they overcome?

- 1. The majority of infrastructure projects are difficult in Africa. Importing equipment and securing the right permissions for projects that are new to administrators are challenges.**
- 2. People – we assembled a very good team from local suppliers but they had a steep learning curve with the requirement for global specs.**
- 3. We were under pressure from the cloud providers – and various businesses – to complete our upgrades quickly**

What tangible benefits has the organisation seen as a result of the project's implementation?



SADC Johannesburg and SADC Cape Town, along with East Africa Data Centre (EADC), Nairobi, and Central Africa Data Centre (CADC) are now Africa's largest and most diverse set of carrier grade, highly interconnected purpose-built data centre facilities.

Both SADCs are already home to nearly 100 customers, including global, regional and local telecoms operators, ISPs, cloud service providers and large enterprises.

Connected by the fibre routes of many major carriers, the facilities also host internet exchanges independently operated by INX-ZA. Through a partnership with INX-ZA, the Johannesburg Internet Exchange (JINX) has been expanded to SADC Johannesburg, while the Cape Town Internet Exchange (CINX) has been extended to SADC Cape Town, enabling connected members in any site to peer quickly and cost effectively with members in other data centres.

Microsoft is also using the SADCs to deliver Microsoft Cloud for the first time from data centres located in Africa. Currently Microsoft's cloud customers in Africa rely on cloud services delivered from outside of the continent, but Microsoft's investment will provide cloud services across Africa with the option of data residency in South Africa.

As part of the SADC upgrade, extensive facilities were incorporated to provide customers with a virtual office including a boardroom.

Why nominee should win

- All ADC are built to Tier III standards.
- Further stages of expansion are planned for SADC Johannesburg and SADC Cape Town as Africa Data Centres aims to increase space at the facilities by five-fold over the next five years.
- Customers at Africa Data Centres can also access Liquid Telecom's CloudConnect for Microsoft ExpressRoute service, which enables businesses to create private connections between Azure data centres and infrastructure on-premises or in a colocation environment. In the first half of 2018, Liquid Telecom will be able to offer direct private connections to the South African Azure data centres - marking the first time that businesses.



- **ADC's facility in Nairobi - EADC remains the most connected site in East Africa offering the widest breadth of carriers for its customers through its carrier hotel. The addition of partner DCs in SADC Johannesburg and Cape Town brings the much needed opportunity to host data in multiple locations within the continent – a requirement much sought after by content and cloud service providers as they build hubs in Africa.**

- **ADC as an umbrella brings in the opportunity to standardize products and services, exploit synergies in skills and experiences that can be leveraged upon to better Customer Experience across the group through knowledge and skills sharing and transfer, consolidation of policies, procedures and support functions**