Nominee: Colt Data Centre Services

Nomination title: Colt Data Centre Services gives global businesses the edge

The world is changing at a feverish pace, and new technological innovations are transforming industries beyond recognition. In this climate of constant, tumultuous change, businesses face new opportunities from developments such as AI and the Internet of Things - but also new challenges.

So does the data centre industry. While the facilities on which global communication, collaboration and creativity depend are built to be future-proof, it is impossible to anticipate future technological developments - and therefore future customer needs - with any degree of accuracy.

As a result, data centre providers are in a constant and never-ending race to bring new capabilities online that will provide a reliable, secure and high-performance foundation for new services and technologies, while also meeting new regulations.

Colt Data Centre Service's work in 2017 gives an idea of the scale of the challenge, but also shows what can be achieved by a provider that is completely committed to giving its customers' that vital business edge.

To the edge

One of the biggest trends of 2017 was the growing need for edge computing, and this has been a central part of Colt DCS' global strategy in the past year.

Physical proximity to data has become one of the most important factors in recent years. The proliferation of Internet of Things (IoT) applications, instantaneous financial transactions, connected homes and driverless cars have driven the trend towards edge computing, where connectivity and data transfer must be fast, stable and consistent at all times.

At the same time, businesses' insatiable demand for new services means that we can't afford to ignore the need for hyperscale facilities to support the tremendous growth in data from the likes of connected devices and 5G networks. As a result, Colt DCS' strategy in 2017 and beyond has been largely focused around giving customers the best of both worlds - combining edge connectivity for time-sensitive data with hyperscale capabilities to handle the growing computing and storage requirements.

The foundations of global expansion

The trend towards edge computing has had a big impact on Colt DCS' ambitious global expansion strategy. Take Inzai 2, their latest facility in Japan. Colt DCS has been making significant investments in the Asia-Pacific region for some years now, capitalising on a public cloud market

that is forecast to grow from $10bn today to £13.6bn in 2019. Inzai 2 is Colt DCS' fifth data centre in the country and provides a perfect example of the company's commitment to meeting its customers' challenges. For example, Inzai 2's location was carefully chosen - just 32km from central Tokyo, the data centre is close enough to provide high-performance computing as a core site. It is also connected to a campus of edge facilities such as the nearby Shiohama site, enabling customers to be closer to their end-users where relevant, and utilising the Inzai 2 facility for larger non-latency sensitive applications.

At the same time, data centre construction in the Pacific Rim must take into account the risk of seismic activity, which is why Inzai 2 features several innovations that make it one of the most logically and physically secure high-specification data centres in the region.

Inzai 2, which officially launched in 2017, has been built to withstand earthquakes up to M7 on the Japanese intensity scale. This involved tying the walls, floor and roof together to form a single superstructure. This sits on an isolated foundation that employs seismic isolators and Teflon sliders, which can absorb much of the colossal forces unleashed by an earthquake. As a result, the facility has a Probably Maximum Loss of under 3 per cent - one of the lowest of any building in Japan.

Going ever greener

Inzai 2 demonstrates the lengths Colt DCS goes to in order to balance the competing needs of connectivity, proximity, cost, speed to market as well as efficiency. This latter factor has also been a significant focus over the last year.

With data centre energy use doubling every four years, and IT accounting for around seven per cent of global electricity usage, sustainability has always been high on the agenda for data centre providers. It's safe to say that the data centre industry is well aware of its responsibilities to the wider world.

Colt DCS' commitment to sustainability is reflected in every new facility that is built. Whether it is maximising Power Usage Effectiveness, partnering with local renewable projects, or finding innovative ways to recycle heat energy, Colt DCS has been in the vanguard when it comes to putting the latest techniques into practice.

Colt DCS' facility in Schlieren in Zurich gives a great example of its commitment to green sustainability. The company has invested a new way of recycling heat with the local community. Heat from the servers is being used to warm local buildings, transport facilities and even public swimming pools. Data centres should be an integral part of the local community, and by recycling energy we can all be better neighbours (and global citizens).

Pursuing a hybrid strategy

As important as edge computing is, businesses' demands for new, data-intensive services powered by 5G and the multitude of connected devices means that we cannot afford to neglect the need for hyperscale capabilities. It is no longer practical for the billions of connected devices or applications to use the cloud in the same way smartphones do, and so it is highly likely that the

user experience of such devices will rapidly deteriorate if congestion and latency are not addressed.

This is why Colt DCS has been pursuing a hybrid strategy as it rolls out to new locations around the world. This approach welcomes both full hyperscale (centralised) and edge (decentralised) computing, ensuring that it is able to accommodate every potential application, from those that demand low latency such as driverless cars, to bandwidth-driven services such as low-level processing, backup or storage.

There is a great deal of hard work to ensure that customers can effortlessly provision the latest generation of technologies and services. Colt DCS' success is measured by its users' satisfaction, and its expansion to yet more locations around the world. In this regard, 2017 was another stellar year for Colt DCS, and provides the foundation for further success in 2018.

Why nominee should win

- The success Colt DCS has had with some of the largest hyperscale cloud providers across the board is testament to its credibility in allowing cloud companies speed to market, presence across multiple markets and most importantly, edge presence within key markets operationally available in its portfolio today

- Commitment to serving challenging markets (e.g. earthquake-prone Japan) is testament to Colt DCS' expertise in providing for market-specific needs

- Action, not words on sustainability - Colt DCS' partnering with local renewable projects, or finding innovative ways to remain sustainable showcases the brand's promise to be the most customer-centric data centre provider in the industry