



A DIVISION OF ALTRON

ACS, a division of Altron TMT (Pty) Ltd, was formed in 1993 and is firmly established as a leading player in the secure electronic transactions market. ACS serves select vertical markets with the provision of solutions to the Southern, Eastern and Western African marketplace supported by a rich portfolio of quality services and products.

Industry

Services

Strategic priorities

- Multi-Cloud

Partner

Routed was founded in Cape Town with its head office in Johannesburg and cloud locations in both cities. Routed provides an integrated cloud platform, addressing all enterprise cloud, recovery and modern application development requirements.

VMware footprint

- VMware® Cloud Director®
- VMware Cloud Director Availability™
- VMware vSphere®

Cloud Meets Cloud in Perfect Disaster Recovery Solution for ACS

The digital world today demands constant access to services. What would happen if you went to your doctor and were unable to process your payment because the card system was down? Managing secure electronic transactions and doing this in the cloud requires a failproof disaster recovery system. To enable effective disaster recovery for its own business and to extend the service to its customers, ACS, a division of Altron, has added another cloud to its mix by deploying DR-as-a-Service with VMware Cloud Director Availability into a VMware Cloud Provider Program (VCP) partner.

About the customer

ACS provides select vertical markets with the provision of electronic transaction solutions across Africa and is supported by a rich portfolio of quality services and products. Today, the company delivers its services to customers via a secure cloud environment from its head office in Sandton, Johannesburg. With data security concerns continuing to rise, ACS established a business unit within the company, CyberTech, that specializes in meeting customers' cyber security needs. CyberTech manages the services provided in this environment.

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Mira Andric, Manager Operations and Delivery, ACS



Challenge

ACS delivers a host cloud, security, network and hosting services from its own purpose-built VMware Cloud and data center environment which includes disaster recovery (DR) services for its client's transactional electronic card systems. After SCS determined the need to expand and improve DR, the company established that it wasn't technically or economically feasible for it to build its own additional data center and cloud environment just for DR.

"When you are a DR provider and provide DR services to your own customers who are processing financial transactional data, you need to ensure services rendered are reliable, secure and meet the compliance regulations as well as the uptime requirements of regulatory bodies as well as the customer," says Mira Andric, manager operations and delivery at ACS. "We are a Cloud Service Provider (CSP) and we know what building a cloud entails. We didn't want to build a whole new cloud just for our own DR, so elected to outsource this to a CSP that mirrored our business and technical requirements.

"We host many of the large systems for the Altron Group, and we also run a cyber security division for Altron and have a full SOC (security operations center) and NOC (network operations center). We have attained ISO 27001 certification and are PCI DSS Level 2 compliant, all of which are customer requirements because of the sensitivity of the data we manage. We work with large organizations with intensive SLAs," Andric says.

The Solution

With a well-oiled VMware environment already in place, ACS began discussions with Routed, a CSP player on the VMware Cloud Provider Program. According to Andric the decision to appoint Routed hinged on the fact it could seamlessly integrate with the company's wall-to-floor VMware environment, the level of engagement, proactiveness, its willingness to negotiate and attractive pricing offered.

The ACS solution in the past was reliant on manual recovery; it was granular and complex. The IT teams wanted a self-service solution that they could implement and recover their own systems on demand without having to file tickets and wait for responses.

Running the cloud provisioning and management platform, VMware Cloud Director, and integrating it directly into the Routed VMware Cloud Director platform via the VMware Cloud Director Availability DRaaS solution, ACS is now able to seamlessly provision virtual machines to host its DR environment. Replication of the environment is done to the Routed systems every hour, and every machine that is replicated has its own managed firewalls within the Routed system. The entire service can be brought back in just two hours.

"The workloads we run are massive. We can't just take it to one of the big hyperscalers as the costs would be crippling. People also forget that in the case of Azure (as an example) you have to manage, deploy and run your own security—again at what cost? Routed provides the infrastructure and a self-managed portal that our engineers can log in to for full visibility. We also have direct access to their senior engineers, and the system interoperability between their VMware Cloud Director and our VMware Cloud Director is completely seamless," says Andric.

The VMware Cloud Director Availability Disaster Recovery solution on the Routed side allows for replication of virtual machines and full integration of the Cloud Director environments on both sides. A VMware vSphere replication appliance replicates into the Routed vSphere system and self-service capabilities are passed back to the client through Cloud Director.

The system is also hardware agnostic and ACS is no longer locked into buying the same storage devices and hardware at each refresh cycle.

Business Results and Benefits

If a financial switch goes down a customer will lose millions and the impact could be devastating. “Availability is critical to the success of our operation. We have to be available 24x7x365. Because of the nature of the data we manage for our clients we also have to be able to answer questions around data sovereignty. It is transactional data, so if a client wants to know where their data is, we need to be able to inform a client,” says Andric.

ACS migrated over 30 TB of (backup) data over to the Routed cloud during a period of two weeks, while the full project was completed in three months.

“Our goal is to ensure systems perform accurately and efficiently with no system down time. We honor our commitment to our customers and strive to provide them with the best possible service and give them peace of mind where data security comes into play”, says Andric.

ACS is also assured of security across the environment, and the company can actively monitor potential security breaches and act accordingly. It is running DR-as-a-Service in a scalable, flexible and easy to use system that is now a five-click scenario to run and invoke DR.

“With specialist skills, infrastructure and efficient resources to assist companies, we empower our customers with self-service cloud-based solutions. With ACS we have two VMware Cloud providers talking to each other with ease. Service provider to service provider—where cloud meets cloud in perfect unity. Because we both run VMware on either end, if ACS needs to invoke recovery, they are assured that the destination works,” says Andrew Cruise, managing director at Routed.

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Looking ahead

“The biggest benefit to us is that we have a partner looking at implementing a common layer of storage for storage replication and are open to collaborating with us on all of our future systems. Because they run off VMware this is so much easier. We don’t view Routed as an IaaS supplier—Routed is a partner in our business, and we are currently exploring ways to work together in the future,” says Andric.