



## Alviva Scopes Beyond DRaaS to Create Multi-Cloud Environment

[Alviva Holdings](#) is one of Africa's largest ICT products and services providers. The group comprises operating subsidiaries specializing in distribution, solutions and services, financial services, and central group services. Through its 14 group companies, it provides over 50,000 products, works with around 500 OEM suppliers, and has about 3,800 employees and 15,000 customers.

### Industry

Information Technology

### Partner

[Routed](#), a VMware Cloud Verified Partner, provides an integrated cloud platform, addressing all enterprise cloud, recovery, and modern application development requirements.

### VMware footprint

Routed services built on VMware Cloud® technologies

Alviva Holdings was facing a disaster recovery (DR) crisis. In the event of an outage, potential vandalism because of local unrest, or hardware failure, the information and communications technology (ICT) distributor simply wouldn't be able to recover operations. The need was clear: Alviva required an entirely reimagined DR and backup environment, but the costs were prohibitive. Partnering with VMware Cloud Verified Partner, Routed, Alviva turned the challenge into an opportunity. With VMware Cloud technologies provided by Routed, Alviva evolved what started as a simple DR service into a consumption-based, multi-site DR-as-a-Service and VMware Cloud hosting solution. This is what is helping drive its hybrid cloud plan and enhancing its multi-cloud strategy.

### Centralization is core to Alviva

Based in South Africa, Alviva Holdings is one of Africa's largest providers of ICT products and services with 3,800 employees servicing its over 15,000 customers. The group comprises 14 focused operating subsidiaries specializing in unique product and service offerings which deliver over 50,000 products from around 500 OEM suppliers. The IT team is part of the group's central services and looks after the infrastructure, application and technology needs of 10 core subsidiaries.

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“As a centralized IT business, Alviva recovers our IT costs from the subsidiaries we service. But, because we are in IT, what we offer the business must be more strategic, operational, cost-effective, and functional than the in-house cloud services we offer. ”

Morné van Heerden, Group CIO, Alviva Holdings

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## Trapped under legacy

Fueled by its acquisitive nature, Alviva grew significantly in a relatively short time, resulting in a cornucopia of legacy systems, infrastructure and platforms that were unable to interact with each other. The biggest threat to the business was that it had no official disaster recovery solution or offsite backup. This was a huge risk, not only from a compliance aspect, but also from a business continuity point of view, in the event of a full system failure. Before 2019, the IT team had tried and failed numerous times to create a centralized data center, backup, and DR solution.

“The process had failed because it was always attempted in-house, making it prohibitively expensive. The storage and compute requirements just for Alviva day-to-day operations are significant. Then, we wanted to duplicate this hardware investment, and even as are a technology distributor with access to tech at a reduced cost, it wasn’t affordable,” says Morné van Heerden, group CIO, Alviva Holdings.

A risk facing Alviva was the absence of redundancy in its infrastructure. This was driven by the fact that its infrastructure was made up of loosely cobbled together systems acquired from vendor partners, often as demo stock, resulting in a volatile environment.

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“There were numerous outages and a lot of downtime incidents. In a distribution business, downtime is an atrocity. Every minute you are down, you aren’t making sales or pushing volumes, so you aren’t making money. If we didn’t right the problem, the impact of a complete system meltdown without a proper disaster recovery and backup environment would have left us dead in the water.”

Morné van Heerden, Group CIO, Alviva Holdings

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## Avoiding complete business failure

The answer to its problems became immediately apparent when van Heerden and his team met with Routed, a VMware Cloud Verified Partner, who came in with a solution approach that entailed a cloud hosted DR environment in its Johannesburg data center. While the IT team had been mulling over a cloud strategy, the core and immediate need was a robust disaster recovery environment that could serve the whole group.

“Routed immediately understood that it would be challenging to keep up if we had to purchase our own hardware. I had worked with its VMware Cloud in the past, so while the partner came in with a solution and not a product, I was immediately comfortable with the technology proposed because it’s easy and comparatively stress-free to expand capacity,” says van Heerden.

The migration process started with identifying all business-critical ERP systems, which extended to roughly 30 physical servers. Because of the complexity of the Alviva network, all conflicts across its multiple data centers, routing access rules, and myriad systems must have been resolved before deploying onto the VMware Cloud, including conflicts within existing Hyper V environments. But, the process only took two months, after which the team was able to start replication of its 60 Office servers.

The project was an evolution. Instead of stopping at just a DR solution, Alviva started unpacking the total value and benefits of VMware Cloud. The conversation also began to shift to a more national multi-site focus.

“We have a truly strategic partnership with Alviva. Even though the initial ask was to provide DR for critical virtual machines, as Morné became more aware of what’s possible with the VMware Cloud, it opened new doors. Solutions appeared to problems that were not expected or anticipated. As a result, the capabilities and outcomes of the Alviva environment expanded,” says Andrew Cruise, CEO, Routed.

## Turning a challenge into an opportunity

The new environment immediately delivered a high-performance, high-availability infrastructure that, at a VMware layer, integrated seamlessly with the Alviva production systems. And, according to van Heerden, his team can spin up a complete replica of a production system in less than 30 minutes, and operations continue uninterrupted.

Alviva now has DR capabilities in Routed data centers in Cape Town and Johannesburg, with backup data services in both. When the company starts to look at moving production servers over, it will leverage these capabilities. According to van Heerden, what was going to be “bog standard” DR has become a true strategic enabler to the business. And it’s a scalable environment that hosts data locally which is critical considering the local data sovereignty requirements that demand in-country locality and data residency.

“What we achieved in just six months supersedes the initial scope of what we wanted to achieve with VMware Cloud. I would never have thought we could, in a reasonable time, spin up all 300 to 350 of our servers in a Cape Town data center without investing a single cent in hardware,” said van Heerden.

From a risk factor, by using VMware in its cloud environment and being a local company with local services, Routed has become firmly entrenched as a trusted advisor to the business. As Routed continually upgrades and refreshes its hardware, the benefit is that Alviva gets continually improved performance..

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“We are a full VMware house. And I think this is noteworthy as the product itself is important because it must fit in with our infrastructure. If we put Routed and VMware aside, we have only been able to achieve what we have because the product is a phenomenal strategic fit with all the other technologies. Everything we worked on from a security, governance, and infrastructure backup perspective could only be achieved because of the seamless connection with our VMware environment.”

Morné van Heerden, Group CIO, Alviva Holdings

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### A more expansive cloud

In the future, Van Heerden says the company wants to expand its presence in the cloud, moving production workloads onto the Routed VMware Cloud environment. In addition, Alviva is looking at VMware Aria Operations™ in the Routed VMware Cloud to assist with monitoring, reporting, capacity planning and insight into its operations.

“If the COVID-19 pandemic taught us anything, it was to put all your continuity plans to the immediate test. It’s outdated to think your data center needs to be contained in four walls you own. Right now, probably 40 to 45 percent of our applications aren’t hosted in our data center or replicated to Routed. The world’s changed, and the traditional data center is falling away. The cloud supports that, which makes moving our production workloads into the Routed VMware Cloud the natural evolution.”