ENTERPRISE CLOUD SERVICES

Enterpise Cloud Services runs order-to-cash billing operations

Cycle30 wasn't a typical start-up. After nearly a decade running the order-to-cash billing services operations at GCI, Alaska's largest carrier of voice, video and data communication services, the Cycle30 team was launched as a wholly owned subsidiary company. Having earned its stripes delivering this billing solution to the icy reaches of the last frontier, Cycle30 set its sights on serving telecommunications and cable companies in the lower 48 states.

"Alaska has some of the most diverse geography in the world," says Jim Dunlap, Cycle30 President and former GCI Chief Information Officer. "With such a vast expanse and challenging terrain, telecom services are even more critical and more highly valued than in other places. We gained an appreciation of that while empowering GCI's business in both the remote and urban areas of Alaska."

According to Dunlap, that history, combined with a tried-and-tested billing model, experienced staff and seasoned executive management, had already positioned Cycle30 as the telco industry's only provider of comprehensive managed billing services. "Unlike other billing services providers, Cycle30 isn't a software company or a services integrator. We approach the billing business like an operator would," he said. "We bought a handful of commercial, off-the-shelf billing solutions that everyone knows and then spent years integrating and perfecting them into a complete order-to-cash platform."

With its model in place, Cycle30 realised that to hit the ground running it needed to quickly scale data centre operations to meet the anticipated rapid upturn in customer billing volume. In addition to increasing its data centre footprint, Cycle30 required an IT infrastructure to ensure its customers have always-on access to hosted billing information, and the redundancy and data security to guard against data loss, whether resulting from a power outage or a wide spread disaster. "We sought an IT services partner that would enable us to deliver top-class service to our customers. Rather than build our own data centre, we wanted to focus on what we do really well, which is running an order-to-cash billing operation."

When looking for a new solution, Cycle30 described its ideal environment as a three-legged stool consisting of dedicated managed production services, data replication for recovery, and cloud-based Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) that would enable the company to quickly attack new business opportunities without investing in costly infrastructure expansion. Cycle30 sought a partner that was as experienced, resilient and customer focused as they are in regards to billing operations.

CYCLE30

Business challenge
Cycle30 launched its order-to-cash billing service and needed a fast, reliable, cost-effective way to boost application availability and create a growth path to meet anticipated customer demand.

Solution
- Enterprise Cloud Services
- Managed Hosting
- Recovery Services.

"We were looking for a top-tier enterprise cloud services partner that knows its business better than anyone else and lets us do what we do best, which is run a complete billing operation. In turn, this lets our customers focus on what they do best, which is finding, servicing and keeping their customers."

Jim Dunlap,
President and former GCI Chief Information Officer, Cycle30

SUNGARD® **AVAILABILITY SERVICES**™

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"Sungard Availability Services' unique ability to provide enterprise cloud services and a dedicated hosted environment met our needs to achieve application availability and recovery."

Jim Dunlap,
President and former GCI
Chief Information Officer,
Cycle30

Business benefits

As a result of the hybrid solution, Cycle30 is able to focus on customer service and business growth without committing precious capital resources to expanding and managing its data centre to support operations. Cycle30 also has the information availability it needs to meet the demanding, around-the-clock billing requirements of customers.

Following a 10-month search, during which Cycle30 opened its headquarters in Seattle, the company turned to Sungard Availability Services to provide Enterprise Cloud Services and a dedicated hosted environment to support its billing "engine." The Cycle30 billing engine had already been processing more than 500,000 residential invoices and another 30,000 complex commercial invoices each month. Additionally, Cycle30 utilised the Sungard AS IT infrastructure to host a sophisticated array of workforce management, provisioning, point-of-sale, activation, thresholding alerts, trouble ticketing and operational tools. The hybrid solution of IaaS and dedicated managed environments enables Cycle30 to achieve high levels of availability and redundancy.

"We'd been looking for a while for a data centre solution that could serve telcos, cable and utility companies across the lower 48 and Canada," Dunlap said. "One of those requirements was a bi-coastal location. Even though everything is virtual, you'd still like to know you have data centre support nearby. At the same time, you want to have something available that's sufficiently far away that you're okay if your half of the coast crumbles into the sea."

Sungard AS supports Cycle30's hosted billing operations. Cycle30's production system infrastructure, including operating system management, network, security and backup services, are fully managed by Sungard AS. Enterprise-grade cloud services, recovery and offsite replication services are handled at a Sungard AS data centre. The solution addresses Cycle30's need for high availability, while leveraging the flexibility of cloud technology.

"One of the reasons we chose Sungard was because they provided a hybrid solution that was geographically diverse and delivered high availability," Dunlap said. "We saw strength in the continuous uptime enabled by Sungard and the ability to address unplanned outages with an aggressive RTO (recovery time objective) measured in hours, not days. We also knew that the strength and sophistication of the facilities would in themselves be a strong reference for our customers."

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Sungard AS's Enterprise Cloud Services offered another competitive edge for a company bracing for tight deadlines and unanticipated customer demands. "Speed-to-market was important to Cycle30 and the cloud was a big help there," Dunlap said. "Sungard's IaaS solution allowed us to turn up our platform quickly, and that experience gave us confidence that Sungard will help us serve customers on accelerated timelines."

By adopting the Sungard AS's solution, Cycle30 is able to spend less time managing its infrastructure, freeing more resources to focus on customer service and business growth.

"With Sungard, we have no surprises in terms of servers failing outside of the replacement schedule," Dunlap said. "We have a better system and a better plan that is turning much of the data centre environment from a capital expenditure to an operating expenditure. We can free up that investment and put it instead back into growing our business. When the servers and systems are running faster and more efficiently, we can process each billing cycle more quickly, and, most importantly, serve our customers better."

About Sungard Availability Services
Sungard Availability Services provides managed IT services, information availability consulting services, business continuity management software, and disaster recovery services. To learn more, visit www.sungardas.co.uk or call 0800 143 413

EMEA Head Office:
Unit B Heathrow Corporate Park, Green Lane, Hounslow, Middlesex TW4 6ER
+44 (0)800 143 413

Belgium
+32 (0)2 513 3618 www.sungardas.be
France
+33 (0)1 64 80 61 61 www.sungardas.fr
India
(+91) 20 673 10 400 www.sungardas.in
Ireland
+353 (0)1 467 3650 www.sungardas.ie
Luxembourg
+352 357305-1 www.sungardas.lu
Sweden
+46 (0) 8 666 32 00 www.sungardas.se

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