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Cloud Native Platform provider Civo rides a journey to growth using Vespertec

CIVO

Background

Civo is a cloud provider that is built from the ground up to be different. It's faster, easier, and designed with the modern developer experience in mind. Being cloud native, it's designed first and foremost to support containerised applications, and its predictable pricing model means its users only pay for the resources they need, with no surprises. Civo is the blueprint for how cloud providers should be: more sustainable and open by design.

Growing fast, Civo's cloud platform already has regions in London, New York and Frankfurt. A platform with a focus on speed, it allows developers to launch a Kubernetes cluster in a fraction of the time of other cloud providers.

However, when Civo first went to market to look for a hardware partner to support its ambitious goals, it was little more than a concept. It was an idea to build the world's first production-ready Kubernetes platform using K3s, the fastest version of Kubernetes. Civo needed a hardware partner to realise its dream.

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Challenge

Building a cloud platform from scratch is a huge challenge, and whilst the Civo team was primarily focused on the process of creating a fast, secure, robust software platform, it realised that hardware also lay at the core of its mission to develop a simplified, open cloud solution.

Civo was looking for a partner that could do more than just provide hardware. Civo has big plans to be a developer-centric global cloud platform, and it needed infrastructure that could be easily and quickly deployed to data centres around the world. It needed a hardware partner that was hands-on and could take away the administrative and logistics burden — a partner capable of providing hardware solutions that could be set up quickly, run effectively, and require less on-the-ground management from the Civo team.

Solution

- To meet these challenges, and to support Civo's growth, Vespertec proposed using a rack built using Open Compute Project (OCP) technology originally spun out from Facebook. To be recognised as OCP-certified infrastructure vendors are required to publish designs so that anyone can manufacture them — a requirement that closely aligns with Civo's ethos of openness and transparency.

- OCP racks are more efficient by design — by some measures, they are 35% more energy efficient than traditional 19-inch racks. They are also easier to maintain. Instead of screws, components are secured by colour-coded toolless clips, and any component can be replaced in less than three minutes.

- But the real selling point for Civo was the ability to fully set up, configure and test the new racks at Vespertec's facility and then package and air-freight them to the destination data centre. Here, the Open Rack could simply be rolled into place fully configured and simply connected to power and networking in minutes.

> The big benefit of Open Racks is that we could set them up in Vespertec's facility and then very quickly get them up and running in the destination data centre.
>
> Even delivering them in the middle of a blizzard in New York City didn't slow us down. It was simply a matter of plug-and-play.

Mark Boost, CEO, CIVO

Results

Civo has built the core of its cloud platform using OCP products. However, Civo isn't limited to only OCP with Vespertec; it offers standard 19-inch racks too, so where Civo has a need for standard servers — for instance, for private region edge solutions — Vespertec can deliver.

Recently, the Vespertec team was tasked with sourcing DPUs (Data Processing Units). DPUs are a new class of processor which complement CPUs and GPUs by taking over certain networking and storage duties for a server. For Civo, the benefit was the ability to offload cloud overheads such as packet inspection and hypervisor management, giving tenanted clients the full performance of the server CPU.

Mark adds: "Working with Allan (Vespertec MD) and his team is brilliant. I know I can throw him the most difficult challenges and he always comes through. He can source any component I need, and he'll take the time to research it and give me all the information we need to make the most of the hardware."

Challenges aren't limited to securing new and niche products; simply sourcing a good price for standard hardware components can require weeks of negotiation.

Mark continues: "The Vespertec team is simply a breath of fresh air compared to our previous suppliers. We no longer have to jump through hoops to get the best price, as we did before. Allan is straightforward to work with and gave us a good price from day one. Vespertec even orders long-lead-time components in advance for us, allowing us to draw against the stock when we need it.

"Vespertec now deals with all the planning and logistics for Civo hardware, from building the server racks, to scoping out the destination data centre to ensure there are no potential roadblocks, to moving the racks into place. Vespertec arranges customs paperwork, air freight and ground transportation — it takes away the administrative pain of moving hardware around the world."

Mark concludes: "For a fast-growing start-up like Civo, we don't want to be slowed down in our mission. Having a hardware partner like Vespertec that goes the extra mile means we have more time to work on scaling our business."

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