

Optimizing Cloud IaaS with iland: Two Case Studies

Introduction

The move to public cloud is evolving beyond mere attention to cost to focus more on service optimization and cloud service provider partnership. In fact, EMA has documented some instances where blindly “moving to the cloud” has caused more disruption than value. On the other hand, in many environments public cloud investments have become an essential foundation for optimizing resources based on need and demand, and have even provided superior levels of service performance and availability when compared to in-house data centers. Finding a good partnership with a cloud service provider is therefore critical.

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The two case studies in this report highlight one cloud service provider, iland, with telling strengths in partnering and optimizing to client needs. The first interview was conducted by EMA in July 2015. The second Q&A was derived from dialog and interaction between EMA and iland.

iland: A Closer Look

iland is a cloud service provider featuring infrastructure as a service (IaaS) built on VMware vCloud technology, with data centers in the U.S., UK., and Singapore. Among iland’s services are pay-as-you-go IaaS, Disaster Recovery as a Service (as highlighted in the second interview), support for hosted “private cloud” with a richly functional management portal, and externally hosted backup based on Veeam Cloud Connect technology. iland’s vCloud Connector supports the move from private to public cloud via transfer templates for virtual machines (VMs), while iland also enables the creation of new VMs leveraging either client’s templates or its own standard templates. The company recently announced its Enterprise Cloud Services (ECS) Portal, which enhances management and control for iland customers seeking to optimize cost and performance with advanced features such as automated performance histories, full-text search, and indexing leveraging a Cassandra data warehouse.

Interview with a Lead Architect in a Global Publishing Corporation

In this Q&A, EMA interviews a chief architect in charge of core technology requirements for a major global publishing corporation with critical IT dependencies—including not only support for traditional publishing offerings, but also support for e-learning requirements for university students on a multinational level.

Could you say a little about your company and how it’s supported by IT?

“Our company is focused on publishing and e-learning for education, science, and other areas. Our main offices are in the U.S. and Europe, but we also have offices in 50 countries across the globe. IT is in the process of expanding its coverage to include all 50 offices, starting with the largest and working down toward the smallest.”

What is your role and your organization?

“My role is chief architect for our technology services organization. We are, in effect, the technology branch of our company. Our central IT organization of more than 300 people also provides desktop support, application development, project management, and other services. Outside central IT there are pockets of development for business-facing applications.

“In technology services, we are responsible for managing and optimizing the data center infrastructure and supporting all the applications that cut across the whole company—such as email, SharePoint, and other commonly used applications. We also provide consulting services and support for individual business groups within our corporation to advise them on their application-hosting requirements for business applications unique to them. Finally, we provide strategic guidance on optimizing critical business applications, such as e-learning, which became a critical factor in adopting iland’s IaaS capabilities.”

How did you come to select iland, and how are you using iland IaaS?

“About a year ago, we started using the iland cloud in Europe. One of our European business units needed support for a unique business-facing application for e-learning in universities, and iland had a facility that was a good geographical fit. We went through an evaluation, getting bids from at least six companies. iland’s was the most promising, both in terms of technical features as well as cost and time to execute. Our European operation has been using iland successfully to support our e-learning services for college students—including testing and evaluation—for nearly a year.

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“We’re also using the iland cloud in Europe to stress test our college-directed e-learning services worldwide. This interaction is very bursty, based on time of day and year, so our goal was to enable a dynamic support for performance consistency so that students on the software had a consistently positive experience. So, for instance, we put loads on iland servers to simulate U.S. traffic so that we can test against a mirror copy of what we have in the U.S.

Then, if we decide to make modifications to the applications or the systems, we can be sure we handle the load without changing performance. Similarly, when we anticipate dramatic changes in usage based on time of year, we can anticipate the effects to ensure continuity in service performance. Globally we support up to 2.5 million college students daily, or about 3 billion pages a year.

“We are now seriously discussing taking advantage of iland’s cloud resources in North America in the near future.”

What facilities in particular did iland deliver?

“In order to meet our requirements in Europe, we needed a hybrid cloud approach—a lot of cloud capacity was required, as well as some bare-metal blades for our SQL database. We also needed iland to respond quickly. In fact, they managed the transition within just two months to provide us with a versatile mix of hybrid cloud options that could scale quickly to our needs. iland not only was able to provision bare-metal blades for SQL, they also addressed some of our unique security requirements that required colocation of a pair of Cisco firewalls. In particular, we required attention to both performance and flexibility in order to handle shifting usage and testing requirements. Finally, their Cloud Services portal gives us ongoing insight into usage and performance so we can better optimize their resources. This is important as we need to monitor end-user performance, and the visibility we have into cloud performance through the iland portal helps us do this for application usage that is very bursty.”

What are some of the things you like most about iland?

“Well, the first thing to say is, now that it’s been up and running for almost a year, there are no problems and no complaints. And I like that—no news is good news when it comes to data center performance. And I do like the portal, which works really well for us and gives us the transparency we need. We very much appreciate the way charges and utilization data are broken down and made visible.

“I would also want to stress iland’s flexibility in adapting to our unique needs. That, along with cost, location, and speed of delivery, were the top differentiators for us. Finally, I would add that the people at iland are very professional. Easy to work with and very responsive to what we need. So, as you can imagine, I’m looking forward to expanding our use of iland IaaS services more in the future—hopefully the very near future.”

Case Study Two: Moving to iland with Piab AB

Piab AB is a leader in industrial automation—an innovator in vacuum technology directed primarily at the manufacturing sector. Based in Täby, Sweden, the company has global outreach to 50 countries worldwide.

What was the need?

Piab was wrestling with managing its own data center infrastructure using an incumbent's management software. The process was both laborious and far from risk-free. The choice was either purchasing all new hardware or finding a reliable and effective partner.

How was iland selected?

Piab looked at multiple options, but iland was the best fit based on pricing, flexibility and the richness of iland's services. The company currently uses iland to support its production environment with full responsibility for managing changes in hardware and software.

What iland capabilities stand out?

According to Greg Anderson, CIO at Piab, "The biggest benefit of moving to iland's cloud is that we are able to dynamically adjust our environment at any time. . . . The fact that we don't have to maintain any sort of hardware and deal with hardware system failures makes life a lot easier."

Another feature that Piab depends on is iland's Cloud2Cloud Disaster Recovery-as-a-Service. Piab runs regular tests, with confidence that its data center resources will meet a Recovery Time Objective of four hours and a Recovery Point Objective of between five and 60 minutes, depending on the application. (Recovery point reflects the time required for normal operations to resume once the infrastructure goes down.)

The company also likes iland's Enterprise Cloud Services Portal for the rich levels of visibility and control it offers for managing and optimizing IT resources. Now Piab can focus on its core business strategies without the headaches of managing, maintaining, and assuring its data center infrastructure.

EMA Perspective

EMA has long believed that cloud service providers are destined to divide into two fundamentally different classes: those optimized as commodity (low-cost providers primarily) and those directed at becoming enterprise/business partners. iland is clearly in the latter group, although its cost effectiveness has also been a strength for the company, as highlighted in both interviews. Other highlights here consistently address iland's flexibility and its customer responsiveness, as well as its native strengths in management, disaster recovery, overall performance and availability. Also significant is the added client visibility and control provided via iland's ECS Portal. Adding to all these benefits, both interviews underscore iland's global outreach.

Because of its rich capabilities and willingness to partner, iland is promoting better services for its customers. From an industry perspective, iland is also raising standards for cloud service provider partnerships more broadly by making the public cloud a more integrated part of business service delivery in full communion with enterprise IT technology and business priorities.

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About EMA

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that provides deep insight across the full spectrum of IT and data management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help EMA's clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise line of business users, IT professionals and IT vendors at www.enterprisemanagement.com or blogs.enterprisemanagement.com. You can also follow EMA on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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