

The Australian

IT problem solver with a good lie detector

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Marcus Moufarrige. Picture: Jeremy Piper
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WITH a commerce degree in marketing and real estate, Marcus Moufarrige was looking to become a property developer before he fell into IT.

Moufarrige has been running Servcorp's IT department for about 15 years and has been the company's chief information officer for the past 12.

"It was just having a certain knack for solving IT problems," he says. "Also, I have got a pretty good bullshit filter."

The father of two likes to escape to his farm to grow his own produce when not tending to Servcorp's IT vision.

Servcorp has about 130 locations in 22 countries. It operates one of the largest private telecommunications and facilities cloud services.

Its two markets are serviced office space and a virtual office business.

"The unique thing about our operations is that all of our locations are interconnected," says Moufarrige, who is also sales director.

About 60 per cent of Servcorp's office clients are multi-national companies and the remainder are businesses looking to take the next step. The virtual office clients are mostly small-to-medium enterprises or micro-businesses.

Servcorp was started by Moufarrige's father, Alf, in 1978 after he was unable to find any high-quality office space in a prime location.

"Our CEO (Alf) believed that probably 40 was getting towards the limit of how many office floors we could run, being an Australian business," Moufarrige says.

"The systems we put in to automate provisioning of clients and give us visibility and building a cloud-like interconnected capability is what gave us the ability to expand and scale."

Clients can access cloud telecommunication services and cloud data services and can also walk into a Servcorp location and access Wi-Fi.

"We can even VPN them back to their home server from any location anywhere in the world," he says.

"They can also access physical services as well through a cloud-style portal."

Servcorp has 6000 network end-points, 35,000 clients and about 1000 staff who all connect to the network.

Moufarrige runs an IT department of 100 people, half of whom are in Sydney.

Servcorp is about to rework all its Software-as-a-Service cloud services to clients.

The company's two major projects over the next year are moving all of its back end into the cloud and then building more services on top of that to give more flexibility in terms of accessibility for clients.

"We are good at distributing our own services like telecommunication services and facilities but we haven't quite nailed the third-party distribution of services and that is our next big project," says Moufarrige, whose wife, Fern Bonython, works on dotcom start-up Friendorse.

In the past 10 years, the company has spent \$50 million on hardware to build the network and another \$50m on R&D and human services to build the services that go around it.

"We are rolling out about 15 floors, we have spent about \$500,000 on each floor," Moufarrige says.

"So we are spending \$750,000 a month on hardware and we will spend about \$2 million on R&D and building services to continue to build to put on the platform."

Moufarrige says while cloud computing is hot right now, the next growth is going to come in people reviewing their businesses processes and sales processes.

"I think that there is a bit of a boom on the way, possibly another dotcom boom, because people are really starting to embrace the capabilities that the cloud gives them in simplifying a lot of their processes."

Moufarrige predicts the IT industry will stay strong through the NBN's building phase but doubts the end benefit is going to go to the customer.

"I think Australia needs a broadband policy, but the NBN is probably going to be delivered poorly compared to what we could do if it was a project that was driven by private enterprise and incentivised by the government," he says.

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