CompTIA

Spotlight on Success

Steve Martin

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Navigating Cloud For Business

NEXTDC is an ASX200-listed technology company enabling business transformation through innovative data centre outsourcing solutions, connectivity services and infrastructure management software.

Steve Martin, NEXTDC's head of channel, discusses how the rapidly growing Australian company is helping their partners and customers navigate the cloud.

CompTIA: Can you provide an overview of the business?

Steve: As Australia's leading independent data centre operator with a nationwide network of Tier III facilities, NEXTDC provides enterprise-class co-location services to local and international organisations. With a focus on sustainability and renewable energy, NEXTDC is leading the industry with award-winning engineering solutions for energy efficiency and NABERS 4.5-star certification.

Our Cloud Centre marketplace hosts the country's largest independent ecosystem of carriers, cloud and IT service providers, helping our customers to source and connect with suppliers, partners and customers and build integrated hybrid cloud deployments.

CompTIA: What challenges do you see in the local IT channel?

Steve: There are a number of challenges in the market at moment. The prime one is how to build your business to compute with the appropriate or correct mix of hybrid IT. There are questions for businesses around how much of the business they will run in their own environment and how much they will deploy in a public or private cloud platform. NEXTDC has a large ecosystem of channel partners to help guide customers down the right path for their business needs and which clouds they should use. This is a key challenge because each of the public clouds has its own value proposition and they are all somewhat different.

CompTIA: What opportunities do you see in the local IT channel?

Steve: There are many opportunities at the moment. NEXTDC looks at the marketplace from two perspectives. The first and primary perspective is our partner community. NEXTDC is very partner-focused. To gain the most opportunity for new business, we work with a lot of people in the ICT partner community to help them shape their business offerings and enable their sales teams to engage successfully with their customers. Each partner has a different solution and approach so we work on understanding those approaches and helping them educate their customers on the ways they can do business together. That translates as routes to market and customer segments that make sense for each particular partner and the role we can play to help them be successful.

We also look at the marketplace from an end-customer perspective. What is really challenging the market? What problems are they looking to solve and how we can we help? [This] leads us to ask ourselves if we have the right tools and systems in place. We are

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continually looking at new ways to improve our services and customer experience and anticipate the emerging challenges that will be experienced by our partners and customers.

CompTIA: What successes have you had over the past year?

Steve: The past year has seen NEXTDC take the next big step in the evolution of our business. We have had a broad number of customer and partner wins as well as the rapid adoption of our data centre space – so the past year has been a huge success for NEXTDC as a business. In the six years we've been operational we have built five data centres in five major Australian cities, and in the past three months we have announced new data centres for Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane because the first three are reaching capacity after only a few years of operation. The new Sydney and Melbourne data centres will be mega-scale facilities.

In the past 12 months, NEXTDC has taken on board some significant new customers and partners. We secured the availability of direct connections to major public cloud services in our data centres – Amazon Web Services (AWS) Direct Connect, Microsoft Azure, Office 365 and IBM Direct Link to SoftLayer. In that time, a number of the world's top cloud-services companies, including NetDocuments, StorageCraft and Global Cloud Xchange, have also joined the NEXTDC ecosystem.

CompTIA: What are your plans for the year ahead?

Steve: Building new data centres is first and foremost. We spent around AU$500 million to build the first five data centres and we achieved our maiden profit in the 2016 financial year. Now that we have announced the new data centres, we will collectively be more than double the size of our existing footprint.

Across our five data-centres, we currently have 42 megawatts of capacity, which is a huge amount for the Australian market. Next year, we will add another 61 megawatts across the three new facilities. That will make us the largest data centre operator in Australia by a mile.

CompTIA: What advice can you give other IT channel players?

Steve: Data centres are the future of the IT industry. They are increasingly central to IT strategies, as uptime becomes more essential and data centres become hubs for cloud access and interconnection. Organisations will move away from internally-operated data centres to larger co-location facilities like NEXTDC. There is a great opportunity there for partners and customers alike to assess their business, understand what their overall goals and objectives are, and then align them to the technology solutions that are available today. Once that is decided, organisations should deploy the technology as quickly as possible to move the cost out of their own organisation and leverage the benefits of cloud platforms to dramatically reduce costs for overall IT operations.

CompTIA: What you get out of CompTIA membership?

Steve: For me personally, first and foremost it is a great networking opportunity to connect with a broad number of players, share ideas and listen to new ideas and thinking. Equally, it lets NEXTDC connect with other organisations in the ecosystem and connect with new partners to create new opportunities.