Internode data centre keeps paying off for Empower

> *Internode is technically excellent with a great customer service attitude. Our downtime over nearly five years that could be specifically attributed to Internode is less than 45 minutes which is a fantastic achievement for Internode and for the services we provide to our clients."*
>
> Karen Dale, Managing Director, Empower Masterpay Pty Ltd

Client

Empower

Industry

Human Resources

The Company

Empower Masterpay is a proven expert in the delivery of integrated people management solutions in Australia and New Zealand. Empower develops, markets and supports a comprehensive suite of HR and payroll software solutions, designed to help organisations manage their staff's employment lifecycle. Self Service capability provides easy, up-to-date access for managers and employees anytime, anywhere, while automating organisational processes and workflows. Intelligent, graphical, web based reporting supports proactive decision-making to drive quality outcomes.

In addition, Empower provides a world class systems management service, as well as a range of specialist technical, consulting, software development and support services.

People management solutions expert Empower has successfully met the strong demand for its online payroll and HR service since 2007 through a long-term partnership with Internode.

Empower Masterpay Pty Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Jade Software, delivers integrated, intelligent people management software and services.

With a successful track record spanning over 25 years, Empower services more than 160 clients throughout Australasia, including many household names in the corporate, manufacturing and distribution, financial and government sectors. Together with its New Zealand operation and sister product Jade Star; Empower delivers HR and payroll software, systems management and outsourced pay office services to more than 450,000 employees.

Since 2002, Empower has offered its Australian flagship Empower-HR software via two models: As a traditional packaged product that is licensed and deployed on in-house infrastructure or as an online service, which is expensed as an operating cost and utilised via the Internet. This online model – often referred to as Application Service Provision (ASP) or Software as a Service (SaaS) – has grown in popularity because it reduces capital expenditure and is less dependent on in-house technical IT skills.

During 2006, Empower saw its online payroll service customers increase from 20 to more than 100 organisations as it prepared to retire a two-decade-old, mainframe-based Masterpay payroll service.

In 2007, after purchasing new equipment to meet this significant increase in demand, Empower selected the Internode Data Centre as the right place to put its mission-critical equipment.

Key factors in this decision were security for the data contained by Empower's servers, failsafe availability in the event of a major disruption and high bandwidth capacity to enhance the customer experience when using the Empower-HR system.

Empower Masterpay managing director Karen Dale said Internode had been the right data centre partner, which had contributed to Empower's success. "We needed full redundancy of our systems within a disaster recovery environment," she said.

"We had used a smaller Internode data centre for several years, but had outgrown it. As demand grew for our hosted HR services, we needed more capacity and more servers. In 2007, we invested heavily in new servers and disk arrays to meet that demand. There wasn't enough power or cooling at the old data centre as Storage Area Networks are very power-hungry.

Internode
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"Since we moved our servers, Internode's new data centre has provided us with a lights-out secure data centre with all the capacity required for our hosted services. None of our SaaS customer production systems are at our office – they're all in the data centre.

"Internode is technically excellent with a great customer service attitude. Over five years the Internode specific downtime has been less than 45 minutes. A fantastic achievement for Internode and critical to our delivery of a robust and reliable service for our SaaS clients."

Internode is a national broadband company that provides network services and ADSL2+ Internet access to more than 200,000 customers throughout Australia. The company also operates a major data centre that provides full redundancy for Internode's core network infrastructure as well as offering a state-of-the-art business continuity facility for customers such as Empower.

Ms. Dale said outsourcing its data centre requirements provided affordable access to first-rate facilities. "Internode is an organisation with the ability to manage the data centre for a large number of clients and then share the cost between them," she said.

"One pleasing aspect about Internode is that as costs associated with delivering data centre services reduce, Internode is happy to pass these savings on to their clients. As a result, year by year our costs are reducing, and hence our bottom line is improving, as a natural progression. In addition Internode is continually discussing improvements – at little or no cost – to supply quality networking to our state offices throughout Australia."

Empower Masterpay operates four HP DL380-class servers from the Internode Data Centre plus a number of additional management servers. It also uses a Finisar WDM (Wavelength Divisional Multiplexer), which allows it to manage and individually light up eight discrete communication channels down a dark fibre link provided by Internode between its data centre and Empower's Kent Town office in Adelaide, where it replicates critical production data and provides UAT services to its clients. A further three DL 380 servers are located at Kent Town.

The criticality of communications between Internode and Kent Town is paramount and Internode is well equipped to provide support and 24x7 uptime to Empower.

Empower operates EVA 4000 Storage Area Networks at both sites, replicating data across the fibre link to achieve a best practice Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity process. Empower delivers its SaaS in a fully virtualised environment using VMware to create and manage multiple virtual components on a single physical server.

Internode's data centre is located in a 1000-square-metre building in Adelaide's Central Business District. As well as high-level security for access, including a coded keycard and biometric identification, the data centre has an FM200 fire suppression system that uses gas to extinguish a fire without damaging computer equipment.

The facility has sufficient on-site power generation capacity to run the data centre continuously at peak load. In the event of a power failure, massive batteries can transition the data centre, running at full load, to a diesel-powered generator, which can operate for as long as three days with on-site fuel. As this generator can be refuelled while running, the data centre provides an indefinite runtime.

The site also has dual fibre optic links, connected respectively to the east and west ends of the building, to guarantee that customers experience no disruption to their connectivity. The carrier-neutral data centre already contains connections from Agile Communications, Amcom, Optus, Primus, Nextgen and Telstra, with a process for admitting other carriers as required.

Empower's Karen Dale said the initial "honeymoon" with Internode's data centre had settled into a happy marriage. "We have been very happy with the services and support we receive from Internode and would certainly recommend them," she said.

"We feel very comfortable describing the Internode Data Centre and its services to Empower when we respond to tenders that seek an outsourced environment. As support and monitoring is critical in an online environment, Internode has implemented tools such as NodeMonitor that provide us with greater visibility into our network and associated devices."

About Internode

Internode is a first tier IP carrier committed to using broadband technology to redefine the national telecommunications environment. The Australian-owned company is a trailblazer that delivers broadband services to individuals and businesses throughout Australia. Follow Internode online at **www.internode.on.net/about/follow_us_online**.

To learn more about Internode's business services, please visit www.internode.on.net or telephone 13-NODE (13 66 33).

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