Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Self-service drives clients' transformation plans

Automation accelerates COMLINE's IT service delivery, setting new standards in business agility

The last two years have demonstrated to businesses the importance of moving quickly on IT transformation projects. For IT service providers the challenge is enabling clients to access the services they need, quickly and efficiently. This means relentless automation while enabling clients to self-serve.

Delivering business advantage through IT innovation

Disruption caused by the COVID pandemic has meant a busy two years for the German IT service provider, COMLINE. Clients have been forced to bring forward their transformation plans and quickly adapt to the new circumstances. Proven IT expertise is at a premium.

"We're not one of the industry giants; we're the hidden champion from Hamburg," says COMLINE COO, Ralf Schäfer. "But we grew 15% in services last year, twice as fast as the market."

Revenues for 2020 were $90M. COMLINE is targeting $130M by 2025.

"Growth will come," Schäfer says, "through more customers realizing the fundamental potential of IT to transform their business. Customers of all sizes—not just enterprise class, want to learn more about service process automation, IoT, software development, or cloud delivery models. We see an opportunity to act as consultants, advising on Scrum methodology and agile working to build new digital products and services. We can help customers create new competitive advantages through IT innovation."

COMLINE wants its client-facing teams to become more entrepreneurial. It also wants to streamline its IT infrastructure to create a more dynamic, scalable platform to grow. As part of this, COMLINE wants to migrate services out of its data centers into a new private cloud. This will build flexibility, scale, and commercial control while enabling German data to stay in Germany.

"This will fulfill the strategy that we've been pursuing for years," says Schäfer, "offering customers a real cloud experience from German data centers at competitive prices."

COMLINE SE
Wettbewerbsvorsprung mit IT-Innovationen

Industry: IT services

Region: Germany

Vision
Streamline infrastructure provisioning to reduce costs, create flexibility, and free resources to focus on service innovation.

Strategy
Migrate workloads from existing data centers to a private cloud built on HPE GreenLake.

Outcomes
- Establishes self-service functionality for customers
- Reduces provisioning times from weeks to days
- Optimizes energy costs through smarter infrastructure utility

Creating a breathing data center

COMLINE will migrate its outsourcing data centers in Frankfurt and Berlin to the HPE GreenLake edge-to-cloud platform. This will fundamentally transform how the business engages with clients, says Stojan Jarak, COMLINE's business unit director, "creating a breathing data center." It includes a 40% capacity buffer to accommodate spikes in demand.

The migration is made while maintaining COMLINE's continuity with the HPE ProLiant family of servers. The new HPE GreenLake private cloud is built on HPE ProLiant DL380 servers. The use of HPE StoreOnce then establishes efficient storage management. In tandem, these deliver performance and scalability with secure, simple to manage storage.

Jarak says the upgrade is in line with COMLINE's commitment to achieve maximum performance out of its IT infrastructure.

"HPE GreenLake is more than a list of components; it is the big picture," he explains. "It allows us to abstract the hardware and pivot to a service-oriented approach. We have more than 20 years' experience of working with the HPE, and an affinity to ProLiant servers. The move to HPE GreenLake was a natural step."

"

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– **Ralf Schäfer**, COO, COMLINE

The 40% buffer is a practical, not theoretical, utility. COMLINE anticipates the buffer being in regular use, as it conducts proofs of concept with customers or tests new environments. The engagement with HPE allows COMLINE to then reassess baseline capacity, with a fast track to additional resources.

"With HPE GreenLake, we can increase and decrease our capacities just like changing the volume on a sound system," adds Schäfer.

Focusing on service innovation

The engagement promises to transform the speed and delivery of COMLINE's services. The HPE GreenLake platform will form the basis of a more flexible, dynamic business, with the ability to accommodate a broad range of infrastructure demands.

"HPE GreenLake means we can have a new service in place with a new client, tested and ready to go within four weeks," says Jarak. "This is a real competitive advantage and a world away from how things were done in the past. Previously, we'd have had to order new hardware, wait for delivery, and only then start work. Delivery times were in excess of six months."

The ability of the HPE GreenLake platform to absorb fresh demand means COMLINE avoids having to make long-term commitments to new hardware or take up a short-term leasing arrangement. Both scenarios would add cost and inflexibility.

"We are confident in our growth predictions," says Jarak.

"The agreement with HPE provides a capacity buffer with the promise of additional resources when needed. The bedrock of HPE ProLiant ensures we stay up to date with the latest in security, performance, and expandability. Ultimately, the engagement with HPE keeps us out of the logistics of IT and allows us to focus on the customer."

Evidence of COMLINE's new approach to customer service is CACE, the COMLINE Any Cloud Environment. For clients, this acts as a gateway to a catalog of services run in the COMLINE data centers or public cloud. Clients can self-serve a range of functions, orchestrated by a ServiceNow ITSM integration; CACE then deploys the service request to the appropriate environment. The self-service approach has already produced stunning efficiency gains: event dispatching (98.4%), VM Linux® deployments (53.9%), VM resource allocation (47.1%), and ticket handling (96%).
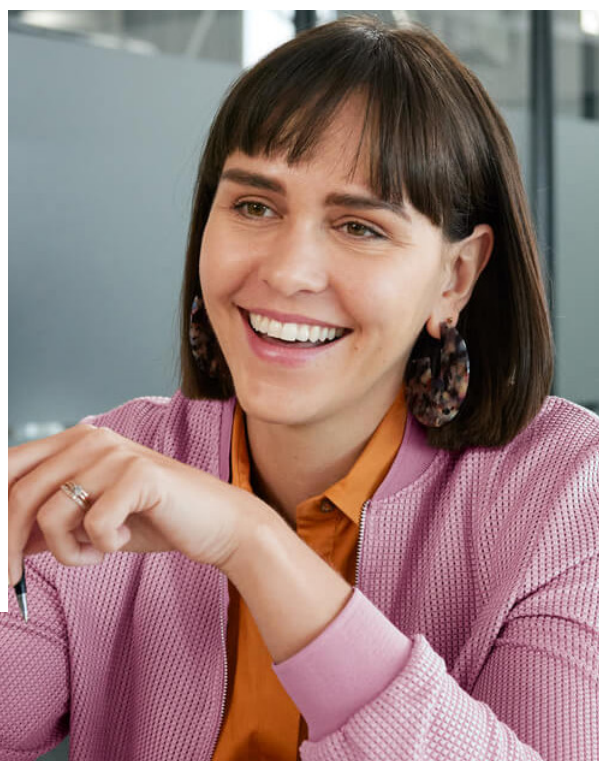
"It means our consulting and operations teams are removed from manual tasks and free to focus on providing our customers with the best possible solutions and services," says Schäfer.

The migration to the HPE GreenLake platform also underpins a more sustainable COMLINE. Jarak says German businesses already demand transparency on the sustainability credentials of their IT service providers. The sharp rise in energy costs means COMLINE needs to demonstrate how it is using energy efficiently. The business made a 5% saving in energy costs through 2021. He expects this figure to increase as COMLINE takes advantage of smarter cloud choices and more efficient HPE hardware.

"We can now make decisions on where to run workloads based on energy efficiency and to show these savings to clients. Also, automation removes manual interaction," says Jarak. "We're running a highly efficient operation."

According to Schäfer, automation also allows COMLINE to invest in its most precious commodity: people.

"Our biggest challenge is finding and retaining skilled people. It's not only about money. You have to create the right culture for people to grow and to do great work. Automation provides the space for people to develop their careers."

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