

FLEXIBILITY AND CHOICE ON A SOLID COMPUTING FOUNDATION



➔ Q9 Networks, well known for its high quality data centres and co-location offerings, also offers a comprehensive suite of computing infrastructure services, including: computing platforms (physical servers and virtualization services), storage platforms, network and security devices (switches, routers, firewalls, and load balancers), and recovery services (backups and imaging).

Avoiding the poorly-defined term “managed services” - which means many different things to different people - Q9 calls this services portfolio “Infrastructure Services”. Q9’s Infrastructure Services are unique in that they don’t encroach on the customers’ business applications.

“Many vendors aspire to climb the technology stack, becoming involved in the customers’ application environments,” says Rick Morton, Senior Vice President, Product Engineering at Q9. “We stay focused on what we do best, offering a solid foundation of data centres and computing platforms on which our customers and their applica-

tion partners build and run their business-critical applications.”

PLATFORMS BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP FOR RELIABILITY

Q9’s server offering, a fundamental element of the Infrastructure Services suite, provides a variety of two and four socket servers from Dell, HP, and IBM. The offering includes the time-consuming set-up tasks that businesses, just wanting to get an application up and running as soon as possible, would often rather avoid. Acquiring the hardware, making sure it is properly insured, inventorying the various parts and documenting the installation are all necessary steps before the equipment can be racked and cabled into its final environment. Q9 takes care of all of that, and more.

In addition to providing the physical environment, the Q9 offering includes a variety of choices when it comes to the software platform that will be layered on top of the server hardware. Q9’s original “man-

aged server” offering included operating systems like Microsoft Windows, RedHat, or CentOS. Q9 would bundle in the license fees for the operating system and get it installed and ready for use before turning the server over to the customer. Customers could then access a fully functional server, take control of the environment, and install their business applications. Q9 extended the traditional concept to include a hypervisor (VMWare or Xen) and customers could have Q9 install as many guest operating systems as they required. The guests or virtual machines were treated like traditional managed servers. Customers would then install their applications into the guest hosts and take advantage of the benefits of virtualization.

Over time however, Q9 found that many customers had needs that prevented them from taking advantage of these traditional offerings. They had custom operating systems or they wanted to deploy a “bleeding-edge” virtualized environment. In addition, some customers had bulk agreements with operating system vendors and wanted to leverage the price advantages they could realize through this channel. To address these needs, Q9 created its Bring Your Operating System (BYOS) server offerings.

“The name says it all,” says Morton. “Q9 still deals with all the time-consuming aspects of getting a server ready for deployment but the customer gets to layer their own environment on top. This gives them maximum flexibility to install anything from a hypervisor, to an uncommon operating system, or even a relatively standard Microsoft Windows Server.”

As one would expect, Q9’s server offering, along with all of its other Infrastructure Services,

are co-located in Q9’s highly reliable data centres.

“The Infrastructure Services group at Q9 is a major customer of our co-location services,” says David Ralston, Senior Vice President, Sales at Q9. “Many people may not realize at first that Q9’s data centre services are bundled into every server offering and add significant value to the solution.”

ONSITE SUPPORT IS CRITICAL

Q9 continually works in the background to monitor server hardware on a 7/24 basis. Advances in out-of-band monitoring technology allow the Q9 Control Centre to maintain visibility into the hardware status of a server, in many cases without any involvement of the installed operating system.

“When a problem is detected in the middle of the night,” says Ralston, “Q9 data centre technicians can draw parts or even entire servers from onsite spares to quickly repair or replace the impacted devices or components.”

This model is superior to hardware vendor maintenance contracts, as Q9 takes full responsibility. For standard servers, the parts are onsite, as are the technicians, with redundant hot swappable components replaced without any downtime. Even when a failure is catastrophic, Q9 is in the best position to quickly bring the server back to a functioning state.

Recognizing that there are an infinite variety of customer requirements, Q9 is determined to offer services with maximum flexibility and choice. By taking advantage of these expanded server offerings, customers can be assured that their businesses are running on a solid computing foundation that is reliable, secure and flexible.