

Cloud-Centric Future for Leading UK Colocation & Managed Services Provider Iomart

CUSTOMERCASE



**“Our core expertise is
around our data centers
and around our services”**

Reece Donovan, the new CEO of Iomart Group plc, is excited by the opportunities to help customers on their journey to the cloud. As the organisation looks to evolve its traditional product focused approach to one where expert advice and service take a more prominent role.

Iomart might just be one of the UK's colocation and managed services market's best kept secrets. That's not to say that the company hasn't already established a major presence. Nine data center locations, with 14 data halls, totalling more than 10,000 square feet, a 28MVA capacity, and a 2000km private fibre network running around the UK are strong evidence that Iomart is already a major player in the UK colocation and rapidly developing managed services space. However, where previously the company enjoyed keeping its profile somewhat under the radar, Reece Donovan is keen to take a more open approach. Raising the company's profile is seen as a major objective.

Reece believes that this objective will best be achieved by a combination of factors. These include shifting the company's focus from selling products to more of a consultative, service-oriented, or trusted partner approach. Growing Iomart's large enterprise customer base and ensuring that the company's data center and connectivity infrastructure continues to be a customer enabler. And perhaps above all, working with partners and customers to develop the cloud solutions which are becoming increasingly important to all in a pandemic impacted business world.

Currently, Iomart offers a comprehensive range of managed cloud and security services, as well as colocation space. The company's portfolio includes: public, private and hybrid cloud solutions; virtual desktop; e-commerce hosting; backup and disaster recover as a service; connectivity solutions, including managed SD-WAN; managed security; and consultancy. >

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Reece Donovan, CEO of Iomart Group plc

iomart's customer base is split into three main segments. Right now, the sweet spot is in providing a whole variety of solutions for thousands of companies in the SME space. Alongside this market, iomart also has a vibrant channel partner programme, enabling partners to resell its managed services. And the third customer focus, and the area targeted for growth, is the lower end of the larger enterprise user space.

"Our core expertise is around our data centers and around our services," says Reece. "To address this enterprise space, we're going to broaden our portfolio, make it more applicable. We'll do that either through acquisition or we may partner."

DATA CENTER FOCUS

In order to ensure that iomart can continue to both support and expand its existing services portfolio and customer base, the company operates a continuous data center improvement programme. For example, there's a big project in the London data center right now which is upgrading all the cooling equipment. And, like the rest of the data center industry, iomart is also addressing sustainability issues. Power usage, renewables, overall carbon footprint are all in the spotlight, as Reece explains: "There are some short term actions we can take and, once we've implemented these, we need to have an understanding of what the residual carbon footprint is and what our options are to deal with that." Key to the success of this approach is having confidence in the technology partners who provide the data center critical plant.

For the past eight years, iomart has had one such partnership with physical IT infrastructure specialist, Kinetic IT. Kinetic IT supports iomart nationally with fibre optic and copper structured cabling; design, implementation and secure physical IT relocation; as well as migration and asset disposal services.

Reece explains: "Whether we are kitting out a new space or upgrading, we have a repeatable footprint. So, we have the same cabinets, the same power bars, the same approach to the cabling and the switching. It's highly repeatable and we try to look for that consistency so we know we can rely on the infrastructure that's been installed and we know how it works. For that reason, we don't have an incredibly heterogeneous supply base, that's complicated to support."

Neil Johnston, iomart's Data Center Director, expands on the importance of such partnerships, outlining how Legrand Data Center Solutions was identified as a key supplier: "We met the Legrand Data Center Solutions team at Data Center World and the relationship grew from there. Once we'd tried the Server Technology PDUs in our rack system, we got the bar down to a size we could fit in the recess of the rack. This meant that power from the server could do a 180 degree turn, with locking power cables, so there would be no impediment at the back of the rack when technicians were working on them."

Neil adds: "PDUs can sometimes be mistaken as 'just a power plug socket', but this could not be further from the truth. The PDUs in our data centers are the main arteries, delivering applications to our customers to maintain the heartbeat of their businesses. We use multiple SKUs, dependent on the required technology and port count. Legrand has over 12,000 SKUs in its range, so we know they can always meet our requirements." The main Server Technology PDUs used by Kinetic IT/iomart are the STV 4540K/STV4541K models. More recently, ServerTech's HDOT and horizontal PDUs have also been deployed.

"The lead times, support and customer service of Server Technology, through Kinetic IT, are first-class. As for the PDUs themselves – they just work!"

There are good warranties and no quibble replacement. We have not had any PDU failures and, moving forward, many of our customers are asking for three phase supplies for higher power density."



CUSTOMER CASE



Tom Cella, Managing Director of Kinetic IT

Reece continues: "What are we looking for? The companies we can rely on to understand data center technology and to provide us with the capabilities we need. We look to create true partnerships, because the data center infrastructure is mission critical. And if we understand what our partners are good at, we can align them with what we are going to do in a highly repeatable way."

FIT FOR THE FUTURE

As businesses begin to make more long-term, permanent decisions in response to the major disruption of the past year, iomart is confident that it has a key role to play. The new world of work places great emphasis on flexible working, software-as-a-service, security and, perhaps above all else, the importance of fast, reliable connectivity. Reece is confident that iomart's technology portfolio, built on a strong data center and network foundation, will win it many new customers.

He concludes: "We've got a wonderful business. We are highly resilient, and we are moving to build on what we've got, to make us much more business centric so that we take away that complexity for customers. We want to be that helping hand and give them the opportunity to unleash the value that's in their business. And we will do this by taking care of their IT infrastructure and services, allowing them to focus on their core business." ■

THE KINETIC IT CONNECTION

Kinetic IT supports iomart's technological requirements especially around large integration projects. For example, when the company makes an acquisition and needs to bring the infrastructure into one of the iomart data centers. One such project involved the migration of a suite of hardware from a data center located in Birmingham to iomart's own Maidenhead data center. The active hardware consisted of 384 servers and associated networking equipment. This hardware had to be relocated, reinstalled and commissioned within a 14 hour window to minimise the downtime of critical services. This tight migration window needed to account for the disconnecting and de-racking of equipment, and the packing and transportation to Maidenhead. At the target location, the equipment had to be offloaded to the correction position, installed, cabled and powered on so that phased testing could take place.

The successful execution of this project, and the many regular interactions between iomart and Kinetic IT is a testament to the partnership between the two organisations. As Tom Cella, Managing Director of Kinetic IT, summarises: "iomart's technology and operational teams are truly world class. It is a pleasure to work with them on a daily basis to provide a trusted and flawless service, through the use of technology solutions such as the Server Technology products and services, to their prestigious customer base."

Kinetic IT realised that Server Technology could not just be relied upon, but was also something of a PDU technology pioneer. Tom comments: "We believe that we are very much a pioneer when it comes to innovation in the data center industry, and it was great to find a global partner that had a similarly positive approach to technology innovation."

Tom continues: "The other thing that struck us was that Legrand is the right company for us to deal with. Regardless of the size of the organisation and the global presence of Legrand, they still have that local teams and personal approach. We're not just a number to them."

Tom finishes: "I can't over emphasise that, whether it's dealing with iomart as a client, or Legrand as a supplier, the blend of personal relationships, trust, loyalty and integrity which we've built up over many years is something very special."