

ASCENT TECHNOLOGY OFFERS ABSA THE MOST EFFICIENT DATABASE MANAGEMENT POSSIBLE



Co-sourcing deal ensures that financial giant obtains best possible benefits from the management of its enterprise Microsoft SQL Server database environment.

The bigger the organisation, the larger its database server environment becomes and the more difficult it becomes to proactively manage. In order to ensure that it runs smoothly, constant maintenance, regular service and efficient optimisation are necessary.

Understanding the importance of the Microsoft SQL Server database environment, respected financial services provider Absa chose to adopt a co-sourcing model for the maintenance of this environment. In partnering with Ascent Technology (Ascent), Absa was able to obtain the specific expertise required to ensure the most efficient database management possible.

The co-sourcing model also allows Absa to retain ownership of its sites, intellectual property and equipment, with Ascent providing skilled database personnel to manage and optimise the entire environment. It is a genuine win-win scenario.

Ascent successfully provided support for Absa's entire SQL Server environment under the Service Delivery space in Group Technology for the length of the initial contract. The financial services provider has therefore chosen to renew its agreement with Ascent for a further two years, signing the organisation up to manage an environment that currently has some 700+ Microsoft SQL Servers.

Consolidation exercise

Consolidation is a necessity in any large database environment, as the reduction of complexity is vital in maintaining efficiency. Naturally, the current state of the economy also means that the cost and infrastructure savings such consolidation offers will have a positive impact on an organisation's bottom line.

Over the course of its database management agreements with Absa, both past and present, Ascent has been closely involved



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in a number of consolidation exercises with the bank. As this consolidation process is an ongoing endeavour, it has led to a progressive reduction in the number of servers in the database environment.

This regular reduction in hardware and the concomitant increases in server efficiency that accompany it offer clear cost benefits, while the reduction of the data centre footprint - as well as the centre's reduced energy requirements - dovetails nicely with the green focus of today's forward-thinking organisations.

A further benefit has been the fact that the maintenance of the environment has become more manageable, meaning that Absa can reduce the redundancy levels in the environment, as fewer people are required to ensure maximum efficiency.

With the state of the global economy placing an ever-increasing emphasis on consolidation as

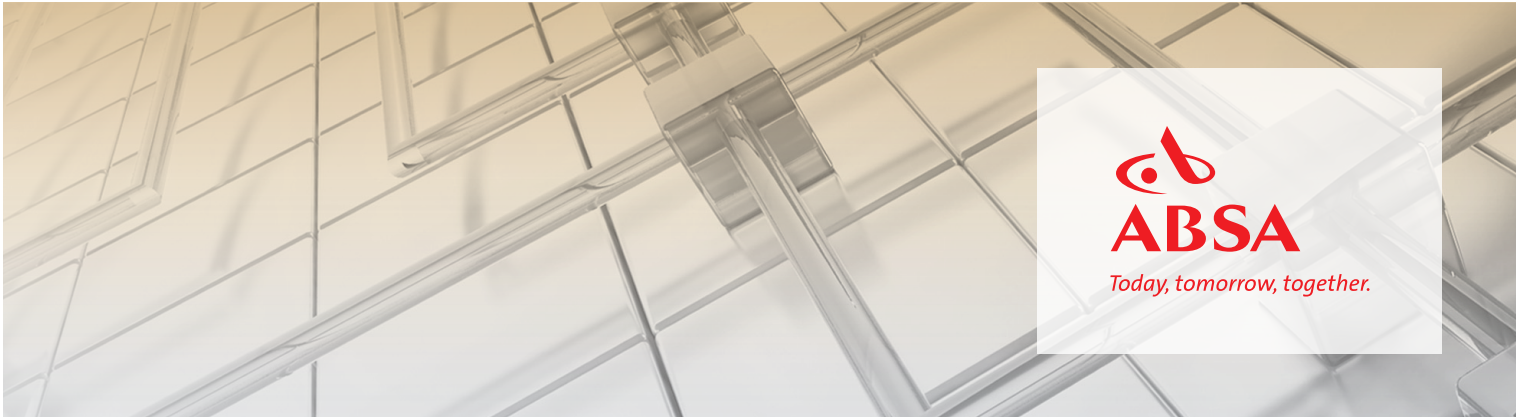
a cost-savings operation, Ascent has leveraged its years of experience in the consolidation game to create further value for Absa in this regard.

Additional benefits

Consolidation is nonetheless just one arm of the overall value proposition. Absa is now also able to leverage newer technologies and reduce its software licensing footprint, while at the same time increasing the overall robustness and efficiency of the database environment.

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This, Absa states, ensures that it gets high levels of expertise and vast knowledge at a very reasonable price. Full support on a 24/7



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basis is also ensured through the permanent placement of consultants onsite.

Thus, Absa has been able to free up vital resources within its organisation. These additional resources can now be applied to specific problems, challenges and opportunities within the business.

The Microsoft connection

A Certified Microsoft Gold Partner, Ascent relationship with the software giant can now be leveraged by Absa to the greater benefit of its overall business, enabling the bank to remain at the forefront of the financial services game.

Microsoft itself recently negotiated a new licensing deal with Absa, one which was very different to the manner in which a typical contract is structured, as it provided the bank with enormous flexibility over the three year period of the deal.

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Microsoft suggests that consolidation was the key to stabilising Absa's SQL Server environment and overcoming many of the licensing issues. This was seen as the mission-critical aspect of the process, which needed to be well architected in order to enhance the benefits and reduce the risks.

The consolidation exercise conducted jointly by Absa and Ascent will now, according to Microsoft, enable the financial organisation to reap the full benefits of the platform. This is because that when it is used in conjunction with the entire range of Microsoft's business functionality, the whole adds up to something greater than the sum of the parts.

Strong relationship

The co-sourcing agreement between Absa and

Ascent is a classic example of two top class businesses working together for mutual benefit.

Absa indicates that it has renewed this agreement based on the high levels of personal service provided by Ascent, its deep knowledge of the Microsoft SQL Server environment and the company's strong focus on the relationship between itself and Absa.

Ascent, on the other hand, states that it will continue to offer Absa an unmatched level of service excellence, by providing a value proposition that includes strong skills, dedicated support, a robust knowledge base, enormous intellectual property and a committed focus on the job at hand - all with the goal of helping to ensure that Absa remains the preeminent financial services organisation in Africa.

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