

# We Keep Microsoft Infrastructure Available to Ensure our Client can do Great Things

## industry:

Professional (Legal advisory, administration and litigation practice)

## country:

South Africa

## business challenge:

Provide support for the practice's critical Microsoft server infrastructure, to enable authentication, communication and collaboration capabilities

## solution:

Microsoft Uptime Maintenance Service

## results:

- Smooth, efficient functioning of the core Microsoft infrastructure, ensuring availability, responsiveness and secure, agile operations
- Access to a range of skilled technical resources and cumulative experience, without diverting focus from its own core operations
- Weekly proactive assessments and reporting give a clear view on system status and allow for planning, preventing reactive short term 'panic' fixes
- Uptime provides 24/7 support
- Reduction in the incidence and length of system disruptions

## Executive Summary

The **diverse legal practice of Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr has flourished through the acquisition of complementary practices and its own organic expansion.** Within a brief space of time - just one year - it first doubled its internal technology user base, and then increased it exponentially thereafter. Dimension Data has been there **to assist in the redesign and consolidation of its Microsoft Infrastructure through all the changes.** Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr is **a thriving, busy law firm and is therefore dependent on instant, reliable, secure and available IT services.** Dimension Data provides Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr with support for its Microsoft Infrastructure - **giving business assurance through professional, skilled resources, maintaining both proactive and reactive service deliverables.**

## Client Overview

Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr is one of South Africa's largest full service business law firms. Its legal teams are based in Cape Town and Johannesburg, giving it sizeable representation and influence in both key financial centres. The firm offers a full range of corporate and commercial legal services in ten key areas, notably intellectual property, competition, dispute resolution, litigation and arbitration, employment, environmental law, finance, tax, technology, media and telecommunications, and trusts and

estates. Its clients include local, national and international companies across a broad range of sectors, ranging from emerging businesses to multinationals, as well as public sector organisations. In addition to its national reach, Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr can offer clients international representation through its alliance with DLA Piper, one of the largest legal services organisations in the world.

## Business Challenge

Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr is a highly respected and active presence in the South African legal community. It has channelled its track record of giving the right advice to clients at the right time into growing a remarkable practice of over 300 lawyers. However, this professional success had the unwelcome side effect of a significant increase in operational demands. The firm moved from having a small user base to a much larger one when the legacy Cliffe Dekker and Hofmeyr, Herbstein and Ginwala law firms merged in September 2008.

Within the first 12 months of its merger and expansion programme, it grew first from a modest user base of 250 to 500, and thereafter to over 650 users. All these people are sophisticated technology users, who rely on fast, secure, advanced technology services to collaborate and execute their briefs in a timely, accurate and well-informed way.

It is imperative that the Microsoft Infrastructure is available at all times. The firm needed a solution that was evolved enough to keep pace with its high performance culture and IT demands. And because its specialty is law and not technology, it was looking for a partner that could mirror its own high internal drive for excellence, performance and accountability in the support of the critical Microsoft Infrastructure, taking care of

its technology needs to the same high standards. Relationship History Dimension Data's involvement with Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr at the time of this engagement stretched back multiple years. During this time we were privileged to assist Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr in designing and deploying the Microsoft Server infrastructure as the firm grew and merged. It was an exciting and mutually rewarding experience to have guided them on two previous technology migrations and we had a good understanding of the professional dynamics and work ethic that drives the practice.

### Solution Provided

Dimension Data's solution to Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr's operational needs is the provision of our premium Microsoft support service, Uptime for Microsoft. Through Uptime, we support the health and availability of Microsoft Active Directory, Microsoft Exchange, and Microsoft ISA (Internet security) for the client. Uptime is delivered through an established, refined delivery methodology that we've seen work in clients of all sizes and across all industry sectors. Its benefits include a reduction in the regularity of service disruptions as well as a reduction in the length and impact of disruptions, should they occur.

### How We Delivered

Through Uptime, we deliver both proactive and reactive services to ensure stability. Proactive system audits are conducted weekly. These include comprehensive health checks and reporting on any issues detected in relation to the infrastructure. The reports generated by these weekly checks are given to Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr's internal IT team to take remedial action on. This enables them to prioritise tasks, and prevent reactive instances.

Peace of mind is reinforced by our weekly presence on-site with the client. Dimension Data is not a remote or virtual business partner, but very much a hands-on, familiar presence at the practice. We're on-site every week to check that things are running smoothly and to consult with the internal IT department.

Should unexpected service disruptions occur, the reactive part of the Uptime support contract will come into play. Senior technical resources are on call 24/7.

When the client places a call through to our call centre, one of our specialist Uptime engineers will remotely enter the client network to diagnose and attempt to resolve the fault in a seamless, quick way. If the fault cannot be repaired remotely, then we despatch an engineer to site to resolve the issue. The response is guaranteed to occur within four hours and the response times are measured as part of the Service Level Agreement that is in place.

### Value Derived

Uptime's value is twofold. Firstly, because of the weekly onsite system assessments that occur, we have insight into the current state of the Microsoft Infrastructure and all the applications and devices running on it. This regular view of Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr's Microsoft environment allows us to be proactive about identifying any potential and upcoming difficulties that will need to be planned for. Not only does this proactive facility allow for improved uptime due to resolving faults before they mature into failures, but it also helps the business plan and budget for upgrades, replacements and improvements.

The second benefit to Uptime is reactive. When an unanticipated failure or fault does occur, we can minimise the impact on users through our speedy and accurate response. Uptime places senior technical resources on 24/7 standby. Usually faults can be restored remotely - if not, then we despatch an on-site resource to the office premises to resolve the fault urgently. All repairs are governed by a strict service level agreement that defines the service parameters and guarantees the level of support and resolution required.

One of the significant benefits of Uptime is that it places a wealth of scarce technical talent at the client's fingertips. Our Uptime technicians, engineers and other operatives are highly trained and qualified and have built an invaluable knowledge base of frequently experienced problems and how best to resolve them that is unrivalled by any other service provider. They are backed by our global business resources

and preferential access to our strategic vendor partners, including Microsoft. Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr also reports that one of the standout advantages of this service for them lies in our reporting capabilities.

The weekly maintenance reports give an overview of where the most pressing issues are and the overall state and health of the environment, and allows the IT department to prioritise issues and tasks according to a "green", "amber", "red" measurement protocol. Some examples of common concerns that might be raised on the reports include an alert about diminishing disk space on a server, a list of outstanding updates that need to be rolled out, and lists of failed patches or other security vulnerabilities.

Another advantage of the weekly generation of reports through Uptime is that it prioritises the tasks that need to be done, reducing risk and freeing up the time and resources of the small specialist internal IT team to focus on core tasks. Uptime's major value lies in its proven track record in maintaining the IT infrastructure, leading to huge savings in efficiencies and productivity, not to mention the expense occasioned by panic-driven short-term fixes. The proactive weekly checks and ongoing reporting and prioritisation of maintenance tasks play a significant role in preventing any break in service, while the well-oiled wheels of the reactive process work to minimise the impact of any disruptions, should they occur.

This leads to huge savings in time and materials, and creates a stable IT environment that allows the business to flow, exchange information and execute its order of work efficiently and cost effectively.

It also plays a significant role in long-term planning. The information on the infrastructure health gleaned from our intimate knowledge of and involvement with Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr's systems allow us to advise on upgrade paths and the best technology path to follow to continue to support the growth and vigour of its business. We are proud of our association with the firm and hope to continue our relationship of trust and collaboration in whatever new challenges lie ahead.