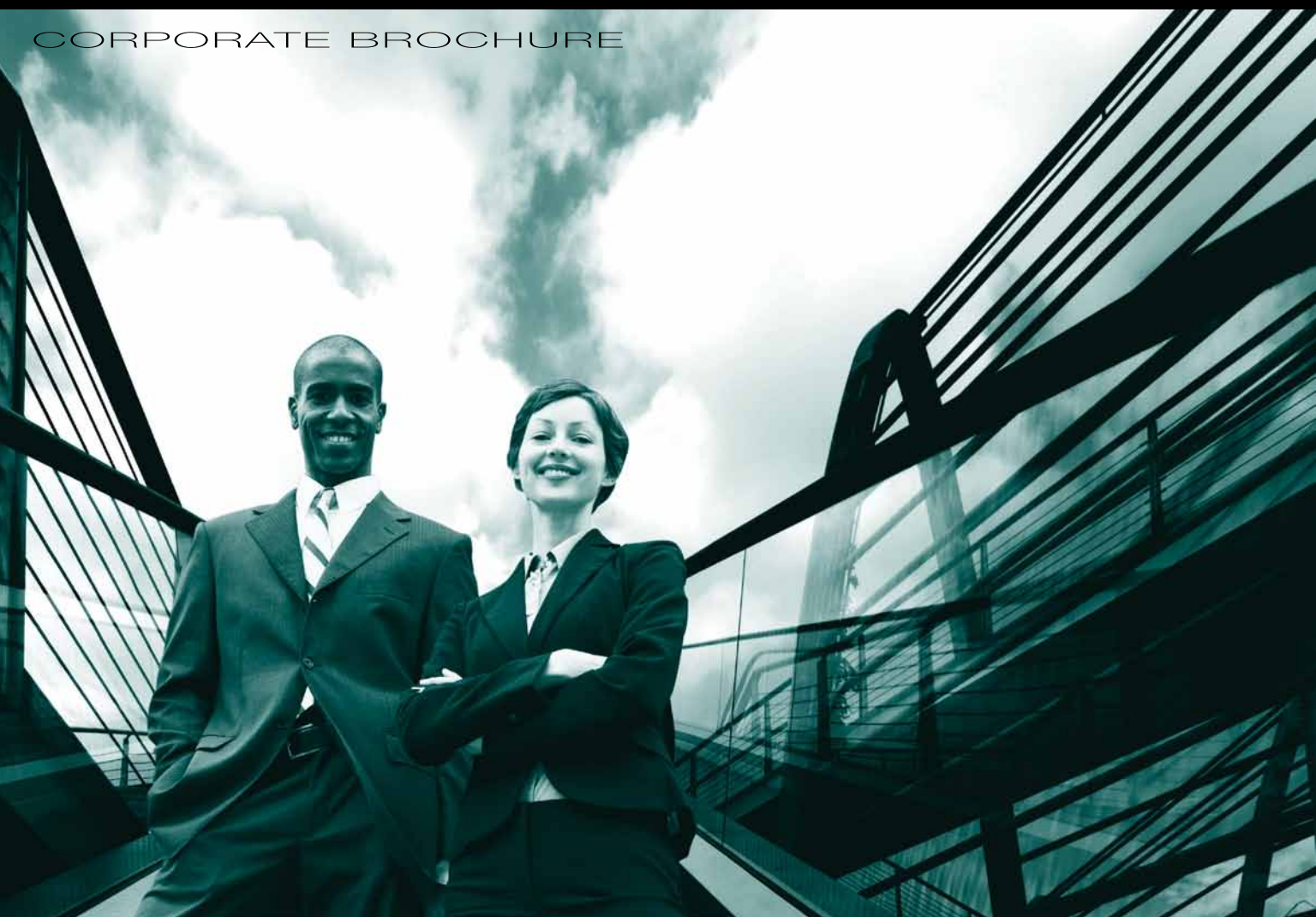# DIMENSION DATA

www.dimensiondata.com

CORPORATE BROCHURE

Buildingsolutions

Anyone involved with computer networks will know that linking the various elements together doesn't come easily; but Jeff Daniel looks at one organisation that makes it look that way

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tudy the progress of Dimension Data since its inception—which has been nothing short of meteoric—and you'll see that it involves three parallel strands.

Despite having a global workforce of over 12,000 and revenues last year of £3 billion, Dimension Data is one of those companies that is a towering giant within the IT community but largely anonymous outside. Part of the problem here is the difficulty in defining exactly what it does—or at least putting limits on what it does. An article such as this can barely scratch the surface.

Unified Communications Solutions – Enhance Your Business

Medium to Large Enterprise Solutions

Small to Medium Enterprise Solutions

A Device for Any Requirement

Multimedia Contact Centre Solutions

Video Conferencing and Collaboration

Aastra MX-ONE

Aastra MX-ONE is the ultimate IP communications system. It gives you the flexibility to respond to specific communications needs, and offers users the right services, wherever they are, using the device of their choice. Since voice, data, video and applications all converge over one network – public or private, fixed or mobile – you can access all your office functions, such as presence management applications and phone services, as well as manage your calendar and contacts. MX-ONE's distributed architecture offers unparalleled flexibility and caters to requirements from 50 up to 500,000 users in one single system. Now that's scalability!

Aastra BusinessPhone

Aastra's Unified Communications solutions integrate various IP-based communication solutions and applications; such as e-mail, voicemail, etc. as a solution package. The unified work environment can be used with mobile and PC-based terminals, or with a contact centre application. Scalable from 10 to 200 ports, BusinessPhone can be adapted to new events and extended to meet the user's needs: Flexibility is a catchword at Aastra!

Aastra Solidus eCare

Today it is vital that your contact centre delivers intelligent and personalised customer service. The key to retaining caller satisfaction is first-call resolution. In practice, this means that you need to accomplish more with less – using new technology – to enhance your customer satisfaction rates and lower costs while increasing agent efficiency. Solidus eCare's proven technology enables consistent, efficient and reliable customer service across all media types. It now includes a complete suite of contact centre applications that offer full flexibility, full scalability (up to 10,000 agents), full openness and high availability.
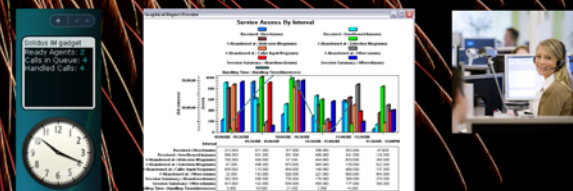
Aastra Blustar

The BluStar 8000i desktop media phone combines true HD video conferencing quality with unified communications and business applications into a powerful collaboration solution and an easy-to-use device. This high quality desktop media phone enhances productivity by helping teams collaborate more effectively – whether for peer to peer communication or for up to 100 way video conferencing.

Aastra End Points

Aastra's extensive portfolio includes a comprehensive list of devices that range from entry-level to executive models across multiple technology types including analogue, digital, IP, SIP, DECT/cordless and even Microsoft Lync integrated units. Whatever the requirement, Aastra has a device suited to your needs.

Based in sub-Saharan Africa and looking for more information on the purchase or resale of Aastra solutions and applications? Give us a call on +27 11 723 9988 or send us an email at sales_ssa@aastra.com and we'll get you started.

Aastra

Unified communication (UC) solutions that make a difference.

In the crowded world of enterprise communication solution providers, one star shines brightly. As a leading global enterprise communications provider, Aastra delivers business communication solutions that truly shine above the rest. Experts in unified and collaborative communications, Aastra helps businesses and people communicate and collaborate more effectively. Innovative, experienced and customer focused, Aastra delivers communication solutions that help grow our customers' business.

Consumers are faced with excessive choice in terms of brand and technologies available in the market today. Unfortunately this buffet of options can sometimes cause more confusion than an actual understanding of the benefits a company will derive from each solution. Effective communication is more about culture than technology. UC simply provides the tools to get you to the level you require.

The manner in which people communicate is also changing. More and more, we move towards communicating according to the situation we're in. With the explosion of social media as the preferred method of communication between friends and family, we are able to choose 'on the fly' the best communications methods to fit your need. In some cases it makes sense to use voice, but in others you may find instant messaging (IM) or video to be the best choice. The person you're contacting also has the option to choose how they wish to be reached, depending on their current activity and presence status. Aastra caters to and enables this level of flexibility through various solution components including:

• Fixed mobile convergence – The integration of a smartphone into the core telephony solution, assisting to reduce call costs (LCR) and ensuring that your mobile workers retain the features and functions they have access to while using their desk phone (e.g. short number or extension dialling).

• Remote agents – Your call or contact centre does not need to be restricted geographically. You can have remote agents working from different branches or even from home, while still reserving all the capabilities of being in the primary office. Contact centres are also able to route alternative media like SMS, web chat and email, along with traditional voice.

• Softphone – Your 'road warriors' are able to set up a virtual office no matter their location, by simply having a portable computer and an internet connection. They are able to emulate desk phone features like corporate directory access, directly from their softphone.

• Collaboration suites – There are many roles in a company that require specific competences and applications that cater to these roles. Aastra CMG addresses these different needs and is tailored to fit each user profile, while remaining flexible enough to integrate into a wide variety of corporate environments. For example: attendant console, presence and availability management, collaboration, automated self-services and desktop call handling. The suite enables the users to choose the most suitable way of communicating, via voice, professional networking, conferencing and chat.

UC is a set of interfaces and applications that take the best parts of social networking tools and adapts them to the modern business environment, seamlessly integrated into current business processes. It's not possible to 'open up' the internal communications and network of a company to everyone in the outside world, for security, reliability and usability reasons; but you can offer a similar look and feel in a corporate environment, maintaining the right level of controls and effectiveness that your business requires. This means that if you're in a meeting, maybe you don't want to take a voice call but rather an IM instead, because it's non-intrusive.

We avoid the all-or-nothing situation which typically sees the call diverted to voicemail. Then another number is called and 'Please leave a message after the beep'. A voicemail is left and the call is returned at a later stage only to receive the same message.

Ping…pong…

Bottom line: loss of efficiency or lack of responsiveness. Time lost and maybe even business lost—not due to your lack of desire or effort, but simply due to the technology you were forced to use.

With today's technology and protocols (e.g. SIP), if someone contacts us, they offer several methods to communicate. The receiver's device, based on a set of preferences, accepts one or several of these methods depending on what is convenient at the time. That is Unified Communications.

That is also why Aastra has chosen to partner with organisations that are experienced in defining key requirements and desired benefits and matching them with the most efficient, cost effective and practical solutions available in the portfolio—keeping our customers' best interests at heart, while improving the way in which they conduct their business.

Dimension Data is a shining example of this, having been a business partner since 1998, well before the Aastra acquisition of the Enterprise business unit of mobile network provider Ericsson in 2008. Creating a staggered, easily adopted approach to UC and as an organisation focused on maintaining skills and expertise, Dimension Data has seen much success over the years while delivering tailored Aastra solutions into the sub-Saharan African market, including many government departments and blue chip organisations.

To ensure accessibility to this level of quality and experience, Aastra is constantly striving to expand its channel footprint throughout sub-Saharan Africa through the addition of accredited business partners and resellers, ensuring professional and convenient service and support across most of the African continent. In support of this, Aastra recently redesigned its Partner Program, further accommodating and steadily developing new and up-and-coming organisations committed to the sale and support of the Aastra portfolio.

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Started in Johannesburg in 1983, when the notion of networked communications was first making an entrance to the business world, Dimension Data has evolved into the archetypal specialist IT services and solutions provider, helping clients plan, build, support and manage their IT infrastructures. It operates at the forefront of networking and communications technology on five continents and 49 countries in all industrialised corners of the globe.

Today, within the company's worldwide interests, South Africa is one of several operating divisions including the rest of Africa and the Middle East. In charge is CEO Allan Cawood, himself founder of DNS, which grew to become South Africa's third largest specialist networking organisation.

"From the very outset," he says, "the ambition and vision of the business has been clear. The managers of Dimension Data knew that the capacity to work on a grand stage was paramount." One wonders, though, whether the three young South Africans who left the comfort of their salaried jobs to start a fledgling business could have anticipated the scale of what they were starting.

Long before investing in dot com businesses was fashionable, Dimension Data had made a sufficiently strong name for itself to go public just four years after going into business. At the time, the R7.5 million that was raised seems a paltry amount compared with the magnitude of investments associated with the business these days. Last year, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation, one of the largest telecommunications service providers anywhere in the world, reached an agreement with Dimension Data and acquired the entire shareholding of the company for approximately £2.1 billion in cash.

These days, Dimension Data's Systems Integration business generates 82 per cent of the group's annual income by providing specialist IT infrastructure solutions across six lines of business: Network Integration, Converged Communications, Security, Data Centre Solutions, Customer Interactive Solutions and Microsoft Solutions.

To get to this point, Dimension Data has from the very earliest of days undertaken an aggressive programme of acquisitions. Within just a few years of going public, the first tentative expansion occurred—first into the neighbouring country of Botswana and then gradually casting the net wider across Africa and into the Asia Pacific region.

Since 1996, barely a year has gone by without buying into some key business—either partially or entirely. The year 2000 was a particularly hectic year: first achieving public listing on the London Stock Exchange and then spending in the order of three quarters of a billion dollars making three IT acquisitions in the US and another in Switzerland, as well as buying outstanding shares in existing investments in the UK and Australia.

So far, then, we have seen two of the three strands: inherent IT engineering skills and a global vision. The third element of Dimension Data's success revolves around the strategic partnerships it has built—particularly with Cisco and Microsoft.

"From the early 1990s," explains Cawood, "we have been linked with Cisco. We were granted Gold Partner status in 1994—one of only six at the time outside the US—and since then we have won countless awards from Cisco for our performance." In fact Dimension Data has been named 'Partner of the Year' on several occasions and last year became only the fourth company anywhere to achieve Cisco Global Certification.

The relationship with Microsoft is almost as longstanding and equally bountiful in terms of awards won and Gold Partnership status earned. In addition, Dimension Data has technology partnership agreements with numerous blue chip names representing the crème de la crème of what's available in IT.

"Dimension Data's global expansion," says Cawood, "has mirrored the drive amongst corporations for a

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worldwide presence. We have identified all the key elements needed to work internationally and brought them into the group."

For clients, welding IT components together that have different technological biases, heritages and local business rules can be a daunting challenge. Global companies depend on networks providing fast, seamless connectivity but have often learnt the hard way of their fragility. When a network goes down, business suffers. Seemingly small slip-ups can cripple things and, in today's competitive marketplace, outages can be extraordinarily expensive in terms of business productivity and damaged client confidence.

"One of the key features in our success," says Cawood, "is our capacity to provide a single point of accountability for all IT procurement and logistics needs. We open a window of visibility for clients into the entire supply chain."

While the majority of revenue for Dimension Data comes from the services it provides, one of the subsidiaries it owns is Plessey, a name synonymous with engineering hardware for over half a century. From an IT solutions perspective, Plessey, with a track record spanning 50 years and regional offices in 13 African countries, is Africa's leading provider of telecoms infrastructure solutions. Plessey has built a reputation of trust and dependability through its project management approach and has become Africa's premier provider of turnkey telecommunications solutions.

Plessey's commitment to quality is demonstrated by the company's ISO 9001 accreditation and is acknowledged in the industry for its commitment to 'execution excellence'. Plessey's expertise has seen it build mobile network base transceiver stations (BTS), wireless local loop (WLL) systems and fibre optic installations in excess of 8,000 sites and 7,500 kilometres respectively, in 26 countries across sub-Saharan Africa.

Dimension Data weathered the slump the IT industry felt in the early 2000s and despite a marked decline in business from the financial sector, has managed the past couple of years with equal success.

Strong growth in Managed Services and in Internet Solutions has seen revenue growth in double digits. Internet Solutions provides IP-based connectivity, communications, data centre and carrier services throughout Africa, serving large public and private sector organisations, medium-sized organisations and, through its channel programme, smaller organisations and consumers. Connectivity solutions include corporate internet access, virtual private networks, community-based connectivity services and broadband; and the business also facilitates person-to-person communications, with services including voice, messaging, facsimile, mobility and fixed-mobile convergence.

Internet Solutions' data centre services provide physical computing infrastructure and applications in the cloud; while carrier offerings include the self-provision of physical connectivity services in cases where it is unable, through normal supplier relationships, to source those services at a competitive price or service level, or where attractive niche opportunities exist.

Meanwhile, tight control over costs has increased gross margin to over 20 per cent with larger dividends and increased cash holdings. www.dimensiondata.com

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