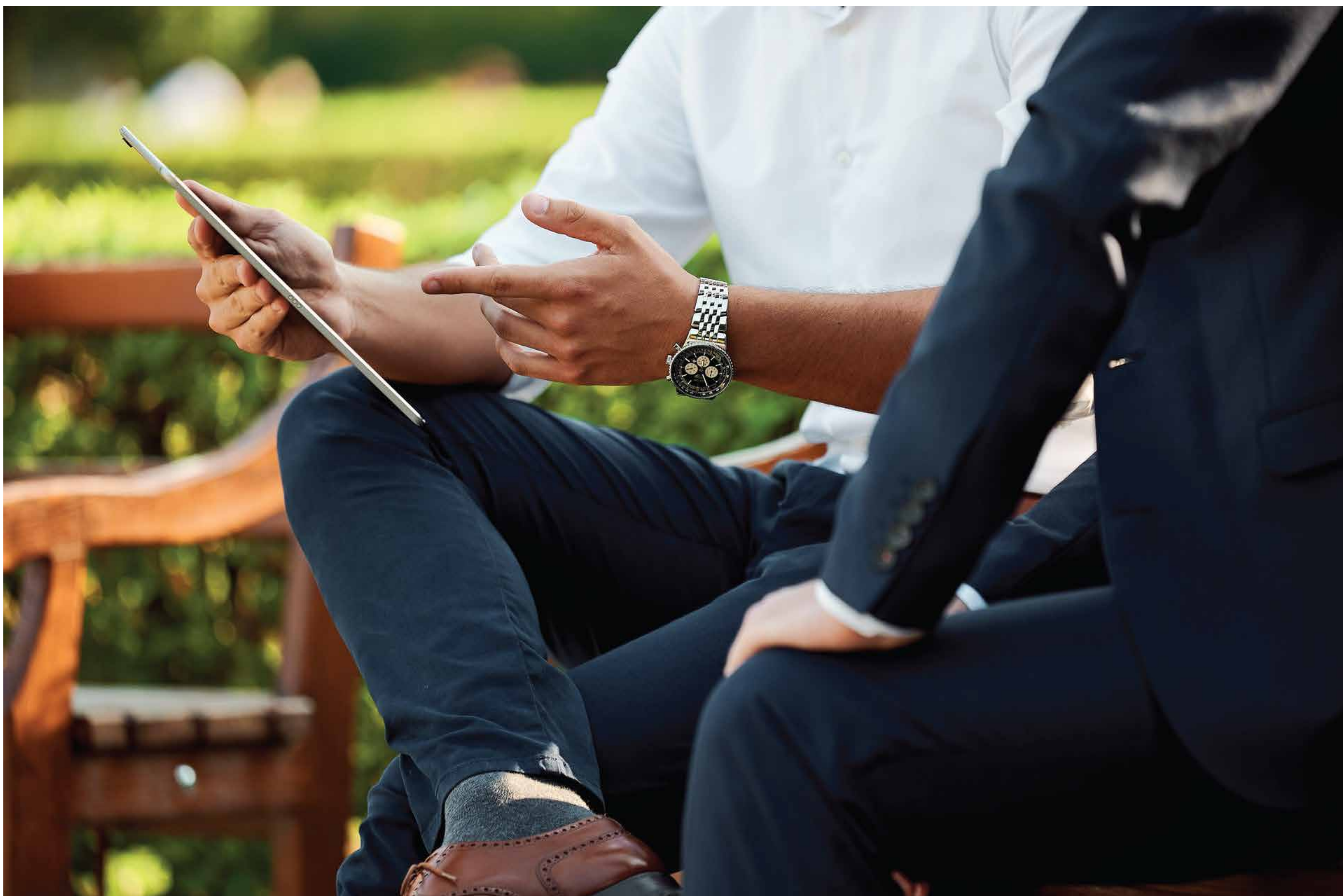


# Business Continuity Through Co-Location





Facing numerous business continuity issues, Kenya's Unga Group turned to LIT to help it co-locate its critical servers in ADC's Tier 3 data centre and implement Office365 in the cloud.

It goes without saying that any unplanned interruption of an organisation's normal business processes can create immense hurdles and costly setbacks. Operations suffer. Revenue suffers. Even employees suffer.

Since unplanned interruptions take many forms, it is vital for businesses to plan for disruptive incidents. Organisations do this by identifying potential threats and analysing their impact on its day-to-day operations, and implementing business continuity measures. An effective business continuity plan is vital, in order to ensure that a disruptive incident does not impact employees' work, customers' orders or the organisation's ability to operate. It was in order to avoid such challenges that the Unga Group, one of Kenya's oldest companies, sought to co-locate its business continuity servers in a secure and reliable environment.

Unga Group is a holding company that has a majority stakes in companies involved with the manufacture and marketing of a broad range of human nutrition, animal nutrition, and animal health products.

Its business continuity challenges arose from the fact that its servers were hosted in one of its plants in Nakuru, but these suffered cable cuts on a regular basis, while it was also difficult to obtain a good fibre Internet connection to the site.

With no way of replacing these cables with fibre and the irregular interruptions created by the cut cables, Unga found that there were times where its databases and connectivity might be out of commission for up to three days, creating an enormous business risk. In addition, with internal communications spread across a range of platforms, such downtime meant employees sometimes had to use their personal Skype for company meetings. Not only was this inefficient and costly for them, it was also risky for the business.



Similar challenges were experienced when using Exchange for e-mail on-premise, as this would also suffer from sporadic downtime - due to a down Internet link, a power outage at the data centre or even simple over-utilisation - which further impacted the business negatively. Many employees also did not have enough space to store their files. These challenges resulted in the company incurring heavy costs for maintenance and security, something it attributed to a lack of sufficient in-house expertise.

## Co-location Initiative

To this end, Unga Group decided to co-locate its business continuity servers, as this approach would allow it to store its equipment in a secure data centre, while the service provider supplied it with a public IP address, bandwidth and the necessary power.

In order to ensure the co-location project went off without a hitch, Unga turned to Liquid Intelligent Technologies (LIT), whose role was to assist in the co-location of the physical servers. This involved moving them from the Unga Holdings offices to Africa Data Centre's (ADC) facility, so as to provide a reliable business continuity environment. It also encompassed the migration from an on-premise Exchange to Microsoft's Office365.

LIT enabled the entire co-location process by working hand in hand with a range of various stakeholders - from the sales manager to the commercial manager and on to the Head of ICT and legal, as well as the GM - to tailor-make a solution that would work for the organisation and would help to ensure that the project was completed in a timely manner.

Unga Holdings faced a number of challenges during the implementation on both a human and a technical level. Firstly, from a technical perspective, there was Internet instability between the company's headquarters and ADC's facility.

LIT ensured a stable connection between the two sites to enable the co-location services to take full effect. On the human side, the Unga ICT department required full and thorough training throughout the process, as well as the training of users with respect to Office365. All training was also provided by LIT.





Furthermore, the implementation of One Drive and SharePoint solved the storage problem that employees faced, which in turn saved Unga approximately \$200,000 in Capex along with a 20% saving in terms of Opex, on an annual basis.

Access to Teams, Planner and Kaizala - via Office 365 - significantly improved workplace organisation. This helped to streamline internal communications by centralising everything on a single platform, making it far easier to collaborate and remain connected as a business.

Most notably, the return on investment (ROI) was achieved in under a year, thanks to the benefits realised in terms of productivity, confidentiality, availability, and integrity, while Unga notes that co-location has brought peace of mind to the business. This is because the ADC facility is a Tier 3 data centre, which means a guaranteed uptime of 99.987% and has eliminated concerns around having cables to servers cut, data not regularly syncing, and various other connectivity issues.

## Spectacular success

The success of the project is attributed to the integration between the two teams being excellent, with everything tracked on Gantt charts, weekly deliverables instituted and even daily meetings as and when required. Thanks to this, the co-location project was delivered within three months, and the Office 365 implementation within one month.

The latter has led to improved availability and efficiency and a significant increase in employees' digital skills - and thus fewer tickets and complaints related to issues or challenges with the new technology. This was part of the change management process also driven by LIT, which was involved in training and onboarding users to Office365, providing the necessary support to make the transition seamless.

Additional benefits include a reduction in the ICT financial year budget, the elimination of the Exchange hardware maintenance and licensing costs, and huge savings on accommodation, transportation, and other physical meeting expenses, thanks to the availability of Microsoft Teams.

Having SharePoint has reduced paperwork and printing costs, as data can be populated on the soft copy via SharePoint, instead of printing a document for signing.

In addition, having email and storage in the cloud has reduced the need for - and hence the cost of - VPN licences for remote staff .

With employees digitally skilled and using the latest cloud-based technologies, and with business continuity now assured, thanks to the co-location of critical servers at ADC, the Unga Group is sitting pretty. By working closely with a trusted partner, LIT, the company is well positioned to take its business to the next level, thanks to the improved efficiencies of staff and their ability to not only serve customers, but to deliver true quality of service.

Challenge	Solution	Result
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-premise servers were costly to maintain and created security concerns</li> <li>• Network instability negatively impacted business</li> <li>• Lack of technical expertise made server management difficult</li> <li>• Employees lacked sufficient storage space and found remote working cumbersome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-location of servers to a Tier 3 data centre</li> <li>• Improved connectivity, guaranteed by LIT</li> <li>• Co-location eliminated the need for on-premise expertise</li> <li>• Migration from Exchange on Premise to Microsoft Office 365</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROI in less than a year, thanks to significant improvements in productivity, confidentiality, availability and integrity</li> <li>• Business continuity issues have been resolved</li> <li>• Co-location has brought peace of mind to the business</li> <li>• Employees can work more effectively, efficiently and in a more agile manner</li> </ul>