StarHub's link-up with IO data centre promises lower IT costs

By GRACE CHNG
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TELCO StarHub aims to develop a smart data centre that can offer new services to help corporate customers lower their IT costs.

It will partner international data centre operator IO, which has a facility in Ang Mo Kio.

The new service, which will leverage real-time analytics to glean insights into customer behaviour and responses, is part of a broader partnership between the firms.

The telco will bundle IO's data centre services as part of its corporate offerings, while IO will extend its product expertise to StarHub. The link-up should enhance cyber security and add other services, such as international network connectivity.

Key target customers include financial institutions, and IT and media companies.

StarHub chief executive Tan Tong Hai said the telco has committed sales figures to IO but he declined to reveal the numbers.

The telco will also invest in a regional network hub at IO's Ang Mo Kio facility to connect the data centre to its global submarine cable system. Both organisations will also devote resources for marketing and research.

IO's US$30 million (S$37.9 million) facility in Ang Mo Kio has signed about $56 million worth of contracts since it opened for business in March this year.

A key selling point of IO is that it builds both the software and hardware needed for data centres.

Customers can remotely monitor the information and tweak it to get better efficiency.

The facility has a modular design so all the computers and related equipment are built in a container-like box, unlike in a purpose-built data centre which needs raised floors to run networking and power cables.

Mr Tan said: "The modular system impressed me. In just three months, a customer can have his own data centre. And because it is a container-like box, it can be located at IO's facility or at the customer's premises."
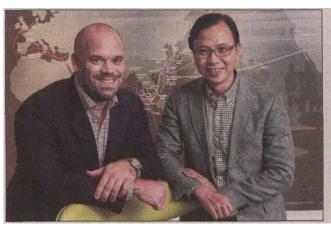
He added that both organisations want to build solutions no one else has. For example, one feature they are keen on is self-learning systems in the data centre.

Said Mr Tan: "We'll leverage real-time analytics to learn what happens when there is an external impact, like a power failure or security breach. We want to know the customers' usage patterns in such instances, how the data centre operations are affected and how the issues are resolved."

IO chief executive George Slessman said the firm will use StarHub's submarine cable network to connect to IO facilities elsewhere and to Asia, where it plans to open new data centres.

"StarHub provides the network connectivity and global links. This is the first arrangement of its kind and, if it works, we'll replicate this elsewhere," he added.

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IO CEO George Slessman (far left) and StarHub CEO Tan Tong Hai plan to offer unique data centre solutions, such as self-learning systems.
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