

CUSTOMER STORY

Atlancis Customer Story

A pioneering African technology solutions provider envisioned the potential of open computing. Sesame by ITRenew turned that vision into reality, which is helping to launch a new era of open computing on the continent.

DANIEL NJUGUNA, CEO OF ATLANCIS

"MANY COMPANIES TALK ABOUT OCP AND ARE EVEN WORKING ON IT, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT ITRENEW WAS DELIVERING ACTUAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE BROADER MARKET, RIGHT NOW. WE COULD TAKE OUR VISION AND MAKE IT A REALITY."



Atlancis: Bonfire of the Vanities

When Daniel Njuguna talks about Atlancis, his technology solutions company, he often makes reference to vanity brands. It's a term he uses to describe the household names and heavy hitters in the enterprise-grade server industry. Their hardware infrastructure can be found in data centers all over the world, including East Africa, where Atlancis itself is headquartered along with its growing customer base.

Ever since co-founding the company in 2011 with his engineering partner Toney Webala, Njuguna had questioned whether the hardware from the usual list of original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) truly represented the best option for him and his customers.

"Over the past twenty years, we've seen African enterprises procure and implement solutions that have predominantly been sourced from these vanity brands," he says.

"Notwithstanding the higher capital expenditure and operational expenditure incurred by these brands, there are also significant issues related to environmental impact, local skillsets, system interoperability, proprietary lock-in, flexibility and scalability."

To give just one example of those interconnected drawbacks, he points to the massive growth of cloud services across the African continent in recent years. In this arena, choosing global vanity brands over homegrown solutions ends up disproportionately benefitting overseas economies rather than local ones. African enterprises, service providers, data centers, engineers and governments find themselves restricted to non-optimized IT ecosystems while paying handsomely for the privilege.

Keeping an Open Mind

"Compared to the OEMs, the capital expenditure argument in favor of the ODMs was really compelling. More important, however, was the flexibility and operational expenditure control that ODM equipment gave Atlancis in developing a predictable cost input model," Njuguna says.

What really intrigued him was the combination of ODM equipment and the Open Compute Project (OCP). Njuguna and Webala had been keeping a close eye on the evolution of the OCP since it was launched by Facebook in the same year that they formed Atlancis. Through collective engineering and the active sharing of ideas, OCP initiative is designed to accelerate the pace of innovation both within and beyond the data center, which made it a great fit for Servernah.

"The flexibility of open source promised to deliver value, optimal performance, comprehensive scalability and ultimately a competitive advantage for us. We were excited by the opportunity to leverage these technologies and their clear advantages in Kenya and across Africa."

By Njuguna's estimation, moving to OCP solutions would shrink capital expenditure by as much as half, leading to considerable savings on the cost of procurement. What's more, the open platform would also cut operational expenditure—that is, the ongoing costs of maintenance, power and support—by nearly 30%.

Freedom from proprietary lock-in would drive a large part of those savings while giving Atlancis more control over application-specific optimizations. In turn, customers would be able to redirect their IT budget savings toward supporting core business activities.

And there was a further, often overlooked benefit to OCP hardware: minimal environmental impact.

"In curbing greenhouse gas emissions by up to twenty-five percent each year, OCP solutions are significantly more sustainable than vanity brand hardware," says Njuguna.

The resulting decision to adopt open technology for its Servernah cloud platform would make Atlancis the first information and communications technology (ICT) services provider in Africa to embrace OCP. But the act of deciding wasn't enough. It would take the right strategic partner to realize their ambitious vision of open computing.



ITRenew: Open for Business

With those ideals in mind, Atlancis turned to ITRenew, a Platinum Member of the OCP that had already been actively involved in the organization for nearly a decade.

"Our first interaction with ITRenew was when we were working with Vesper Technologies, a UK-based systems integrator, to build our Servernah cloud platform. We were primarily trying to maximize compute, storage and network inventory on a fixed budget."

"Many companies talk about OCP and are even working on it, but it was clear that ITRenew was delivering actual solutions for the broader market, right now. We could take our vision and make it a reality," Njuguna states.

Because ITRenew's Sesame solutions are built on OCP principles and OCP certified, they offer a number of design advantages over proprietary solutions. For example, Sesame server racks centralize power into shelves that deliver a superior "N+2" model, meaning there are always two spare power supplies. Not only is this more efficient and less expensive than traditional OEM designs that attach two small power supply units to each server, it offers far better redundancy in the event of a failure.

The Sesame server racks themselves are a standard 24 inches wide. But they maximize the space that OEM racks often waste, thereby allowing three nodes to fit side by side in the space typically occupied by the usual two. That translates to up to 50% more compute and storage power within a standard rack footprint.

Furthermore, Sesame solutions arrive complete and ready to deploy. Server, storage and networking components are all integrated and everything is pre-qualified, tested and assembled. This kind of plug-and-play convenience allows customers to be running production workloads on their new Sesame servers in as little as half an hour.

In addition to increasing efficiency and lowering complexity, customer confidence in the open architecture solutions they planned to implement was top of mind for Atlancis. Sesame solved for that too, starting with gear that delivers superior performance, durability and reliability, and backing it with in-country support, ready access to spare parts for easy maintenance, and full warranties on all solutions.

