



New IT capabilities for an emerging market

Automating hybrid cloud for every
stage of the cloud journey

by Rob Spencer
3-minute read

Imagine accomplishing a week's work in two minutes.

Or doing complex processes correctly the first time, no rework necessary.

These are the kinds of capabilities that GBM, a managed services provider in Central America, wants to bring to the region by helping businesses take a hybrid cloud approach to IT.

The market for managed services is growing rapidly in Central America. Alex Mathews, GBM's Manager of Architecture, sees the demand firsthand in conversations with customers. "Many of them are seeing the unnecessary costs, as well as the capability limitations, of managing their own systems at their own locations," says Mathews. "They need more fit with less fat."



But GBM works with several industries — banking, telco, utilities, small and medium business, and retail — with diverse IT needs and objectives. Some customers simply want to cut costs by outsourcing IT to GBM's managed infrastructure. Others are more active innovators, using the GBM platform to tap into public cloud services.

Mathews recognizes that the hybrid cloud approach to IT — mixing on-premises, private cloud and public cloud resources — allows GBM to deliver the right mix to each customer.

The challenge for GBM, however, is how to provision custom-tailored hybrid cloud environments for every customer without making its own operations impossibly costly and complex.

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Alex Mathews, Manager of Architecture, GBM

Meets a 1-week
service-level
agreement in only

2

minutes

Greater quality
through automation
eliminates rework
that previously took

30%

of virtual machine fulfillment time

Automating hybrid cloud

GBM selected IBM Cloud Pak® for Multicloud Management software, including the Red Hat® OpenShift® container platform, to create and manage bespoke hybrid cloud infrastructures for each of its unique clients. Using the IBM Cloud Pak solution, GBM can move workloads between a customer's on-premises systems, GBM's data center, and any private or public cloud platform — while managing it as one seamless infrastructure.

“We can deliver a complete, very complex environment with a single provisioning process,” says Mathews. “Before, we had to do many things in the network, in the storage, in the server farms to provision a



single application that has three or four different VMs. The Cloud Pak for Multicloud Management gives us, in a single package, a way to standardize and automate provisioning of VMs across

platforms. With just one setup, we can provision and orchestrate many different environments. That reduces our operational expenses in this area by half.”

According to a service-level agreement (SLA) in GBM's contract with customers, when a customer requests a new virtual machine (VM), GBM has one week to provision it to meet the customer's requirements. Today, using the IBM Cloud Pak software, says Mathews, "we do it in two minutes online." And it's not that the one-week SLA was too generous. "Before, it made sense because of the complexity of the environment," explains Mathews.

Alleviating complexity has also helped boost quality. Before, approximately 30% of VM fulfillment time, on average, was spent on rework. Now, the need for rework is almost completely eliminated.

Of course, such leaps forward in capabilities generate corresponding leaps in expectations. "Now, customers want to renegotiate the contract with more challenging SLAs," laughs Mathews.

“Today the multicloud is a very complex environment. And with the [IBM] Cloud Pak [solution] we have the opportunity to see the multicloud in a flat way.”

Alex Mathews, Manager of Architecture, GBM

GBM also drives efficiency by using the IBM Cloud Pak solution to standardize and automate maintenance from a single control pane, even if a customer's environment spans multiple clouds. "Today the multicloud is a very complex environment," says Mathews. "And with the Cloud Pak we have the opportunity to see the multicloud in a flat way."

For example, by using the Red Hat Cloud Forms and Red Hat OpenShift components of the IBM Cloud Pak software, GBM gains clear visibility over containerized VMs across different systems and platforms. VMs can automatically be shifted between systems as needed, meaning hardware outages have little to no effect on service. For customers, this means maximized uptime for their applications.

This ability to abstract applications from the underlying systems is inspiring Mathews and his GBM teammates



to think differently about their work. "We're doing our jobs in a different way. We have brought the focus of our services up a level, to the customer's actual business services." This shift in

thinking illustrates the power of hybrid cloud: it allows a company to focus more on developing the business capabilities it needs and less on the underlying IT.

New thinking, new possibilities

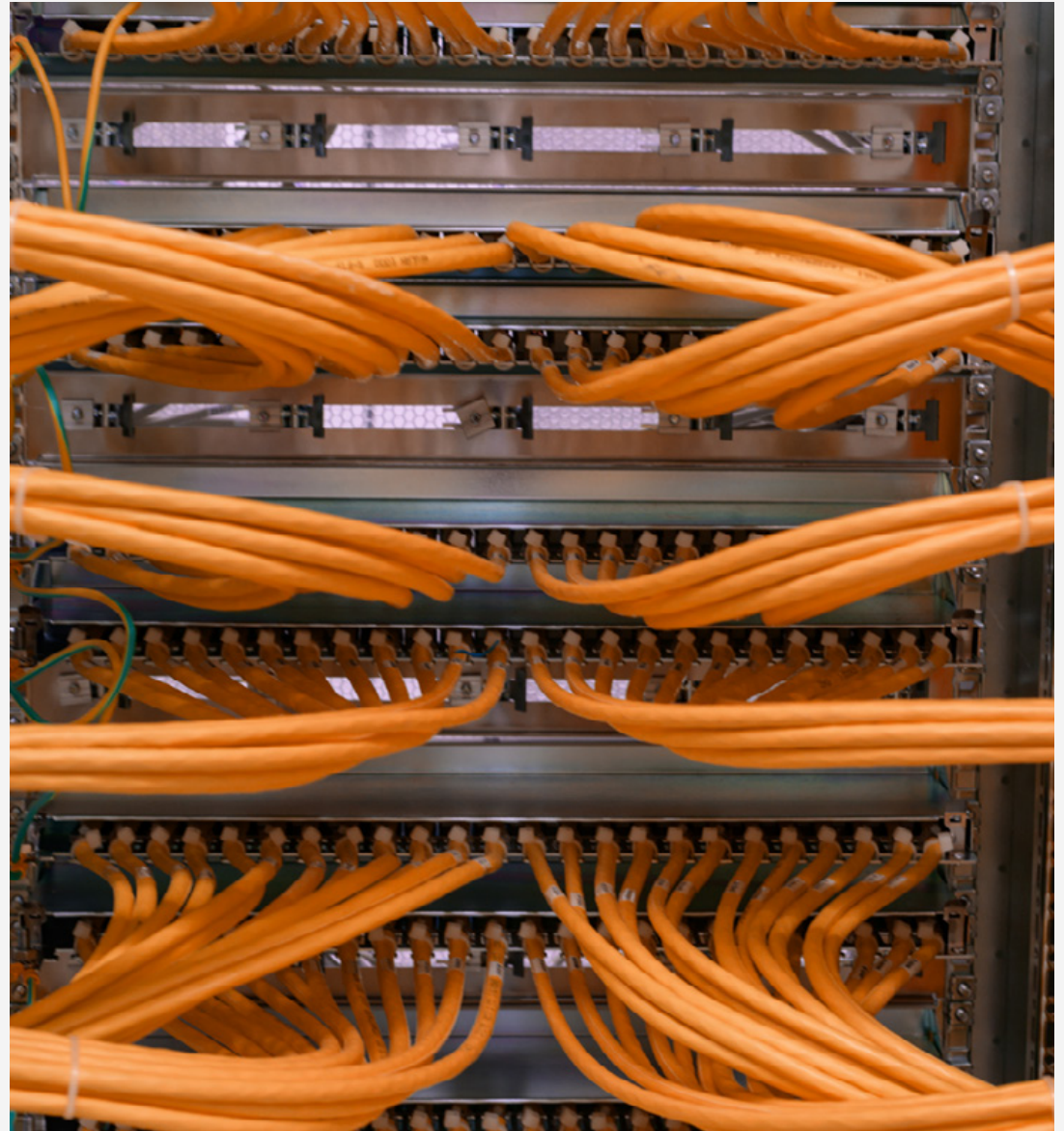
The cloud offers infinite innovation capabilities. GBM's ultimate mission is helping customers take full advantage of them.

As one step in that direction, GBM has built an application modernization sandbox — a pilot environment where customers can convert their applications to flexible microservice architectures, which are more open to cloud-based innovation over time. As most of GBM's customers run enterprise Java applications on the traditional [IBM® WebSphere® Application Server](#) platform, GBM built the sandbox on the [IBM WebSphere Liberty](#) platform, a



cloud-native app server that supports Java microservice development. GBM is also looking to bring automation to the sandbox with the [IBM Mono2Micro](#) service, an AI-driven utility for semi-automatically transforming monolithic Java apps to microservices. The WebSphere Liberty and Mono2Micro solutions are now available in the [IBM WebSphere Hybrid Edition](#).

The long-term vision, says Mathews, is to create an ecosystem of valuable cloud services, like AI, that customers can consume. GBM plans to curate the ecosystem into groups targeted on specific customers or industries, helping shorten and clarify the path to value. And it will use IBM Cloud Pak for Multicloud Management to maintain unified, automated control over the widening universe of services. As Mathews puts it, “We want to integrate the services and be our customers’ broker for innovation.”





About GBM

GBM designs, delivers and manages complete IT solutions across industries in Central America and the Caribbean. It works carefully to understand where its customers are with IT and where they want to go. It then uses its experience and expertise in emerging technologies to deliver custom solutions that meet current needs and allow for continual evolution and innovation.

Solution components

- IBM Cloud Pak® for Multicloud Management
- Red Hat® OpenShift®
- IBM® WebSphere® Hybrid Edition
- IBM Mono2Micro
- IBM WebSphere® Liberty
- IBM WebSphere® Application Server

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