# CEO CFO

**The Most Powerful Name in Corporate News**

Centuric
CLOUD COMPUTING

# Full Service Cloud Computing

Our commitment is to deliver secure, automated, efficient, scalable, and state-of-the-art network resources to our customers while keeping customer service and user experience core to our culture!

Centuric began operations in 2001 and we team with organizations of all sizes from initial strategic consultations and project planning through deployment of solutions to ongoing maintenance, hosting and support. With multiple Tier 4 Datacenters and a state of a state of the art Network operation Center (NOC), Centuric provides a secure environment for clients seeking a hosted solution rather than building their own physical infrastructure and hiring technical specialists.

Furthermore, we continually align our products and services with the evolution of security threats, compliance regulations and market trends. We work with experienced partners and participate in continuing professional education to ensure that our offerings meet our clients' evolving trends.

**Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine**

*Richard Rodriguez- CEO*

**CEOCFO:** *Mr. Rodriguez, what is the concept at Centuric?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** Centuric is a full service cloud computing company. We are an owner and operator of a cloud infrastructure with multiple redundant data centers throughout the US and international. Essentially we provide different types of cloud services for our clients, everything from desktop as a service, to infrastructure as a service, as well as a great deal of business continuity, and back up services.

**CEOCFO:** *Is there a typical client group?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** Our clients are typically SMBs (50-1,000 users). Most of our clients have one thing in common, which is the desire or need to take mission critical systems of premise and put them into a cloud environment. Although clients have different reasoning for migrating various services to the cloud we do see that better disaster recovery solutions, business continuity are common amongst most our clients. In addition, better accessibility by remote and staff is another driver.

**CEOCFO:** *Are most companies you work with coming willingly or are they being nudged?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** I would say today everyone is coming willingly. The concept of cloud computing is finally really starting to sink in and I think most CEOs that I talk with are actively looking for cloud solutions.

**CEOCFO:** *What do you understand at Centuric that makes your offerings better, cheaper, faster, more efficient?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** One thing that sets us apart at Centuric vs. other companies our size in the market is that we have been an infrastructure company for 13 years. Therefore, we have been a business for 13 years, designing and building infrastructure for clients. The only difference today is we do it in a cloud vs. doing it at their site, which would be the old way of doing it. Most of our competition is new, within 3 or 4 years old. We have a much better understanding of what it takes to set up and maintain networks in the cloud. Another differentiator is we design and build our own cloud equipment as well. We have what we call cloud gear. Some of that can go on premise for hybrid solutions but most of it we use in our own datacenter. By operating our backend more economically and efficiently, it allows us to offer the scalability required by our clients at a reasonable price

**CEOCFO:** *What might be something in your equipment that is different because you are designing it yourself?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** It's not all that different, use some standard parts inside but what makes it really different is it is efficient. For example, we might not need as many slots for a certain item; we can control the processors and type of memory, what type of drives, etc. Another way to look at is that it is not designed to be upgraded, it's designed for a specific purpose and then we can add to that, thus more efficient design. Another major difference that I see is because we have

the 13-year history of designing and building networks for our clients we have the ability to do cloud formations or migrating companies from an on premise solution to a cloud base solution. A good example, we have a client we recently migrated that had about 53 or 54 servers on premise that wanted to go to a full cloud solution. We were able to work with them and put a plan together, go through a testing period, and really take a good look at everything required to put the right migration plan together. Once the plan and environment was in place and tested the final migration was completed over a weekend so when their staff came in Monday morning, they logged in and had no idea that over the weekend, their entire local network was taken down and now they are running out of cloud. It's that type of experience that we have to help people move to a cloud in the right way and not have the headaches and lost productivity of downtime.

**CEOCFO:** *How do you reach potential customers?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** We focus mostly on indirect sales. We run a great channel partner program that we manage here. We have a number of partners that are international as well as domestic. We have many locally here in Florida; Puerto Rico is also a big market for us and throughout the islands as well. We also have a full time channel manager that lives in Bogota Columbia, so we do a great amount of business in Latin America as well.

**CEOCFO:** *When one of your partners is speaking to a prospective client, is there an aha moment when they understand the depth and difference of Centuric?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** Certainly, it's tough for a company like ours to really market the depth that we have. We have spent a lot marketing on certain products and services but trying to put it all together and understand the depth of experience and knowledge that we have when it comes to infrastructure and networks is difficult. Usually it's when we're sitting down talking with a prospect that they will say "Wow I did not realize you guys did all that."

> **"When you start looking at many of the big companies out there, they are trying to figure out how they're going to fit into a cloud environment. We are already here and we know this industry and business, what our customers' needs are and we're here to help. We are on a high growth path." - Richard Rodriguez**

**CEOCFO:** *Do many of your customers take advantage of the full range of services that you can offer?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** They do now, yes many of them do. We have many clients that use one or two services. I would say most of our customers use multiple services. Typically, when a client starts with just one service, it's not too much longer before they start moving other services and it becomes a natural progression. A good example here would be: We have a hosted PBX system, so we have many customers who have started with us because they did not want to go out and deal with the headaches of putting their own phone system in place, so they use our hosted PBX. Then they start looking at backup and disaster recovery, and business continuity service and move into that. Another year down the road it is virtual desks or our desktop is a service. Our goal is to always be able to provide as many of those services that we can, that when they are ready to move up and move into another service, they are not looking somewhere else. We're here to help them.

**CEOCFO:** *Are there services that you are not currently offering that you would like to add?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** Sure, as we continue to grow there are many other services that come to mind. Physical security cameras is one. We've talked with some partners about security cameras and taking the video to the cloud for achieving and indexing. We have some clients that develop large residential multitenant buildings with 200+ units. We do bring in a great deal of their fiber lines and telecom in so we have talked to them about adding IPTV in the cloud as well but those are things that are down the road.

**CEOCFO***: There are new technology ideas coming out every day. How do you know what is a keeper and what is likely to fall by the wayside?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** Some of it just has to do with being around for a while so you kind of know what people are looking for. We certainly talk to our customers and get a great deal of feedback from our partners. Our partners are really the ones that are out there on the ground. A partner for us might have 300 or 400 customers that they are dealing with. They are gaining that feedback, consolidating that and getting that back to us on what their customers are requested, what services they think will sell better and what the real need is. We do a lot with our partners, we get a great deal of feedback and we value that. Certainly, we do our own trade shows and continuing education and stay very active in the industry. We participate in many trade shows, attend conferences and our people are all well certified in the different categories of technology whether it's in the Cisco world or Microsoft or VMware world. Everyone has their certifications and we try to stay abreast of what the latest technologies and see they apply and fit our needs. The best way is through our partners.

**CEOCFO:** *What have you learned in the last 6 months to a year that has changed your offering?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** We learn new stuff every day around here. One thing that comes to mind is DaaS (Desktop as a Service), we have been offering virtual desktops for years for our client, long before we were considered a cloud; however, when you start trying to do mass rollouts of certain technology, desktop as a service being one of those and probably one if the

fastest growing services we offer today you really start to see the limitations in the current technology out there. That has been the biggest revelation. We did things a certain way for a long time, but because it was not a widely accepted technology, it worked fine for the minimal clients that were using it. Now that it is becoming more mainstream, you're seeing many issues popping up, so to get passed these limitation you really have to have a good understanding of what the end user is expecting to get out the experience. Fortunately, we've been able to address that and move on but it was an eye opener at first.

**CEOCFO:** *Customer service can be a make or break for a company. How do you maintain a high level; what you do that is above and beyond?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** From a customer service standpoint, one of the things that we do is operate our own NOC or network operation center out of our office here, so it's not something that we outsource to anybody. We do that primarily for the customer service aspect. Any of our customers can call in and know who they are going to be talking to. We manage and monitor all of our networks and our own systems from here as well, so we have technologies in place that allow us to monitor anything that is going on with one of our clients. We know before they know typically if there is an issue in their environment. Most of time we will be on the phone with them or if they do call us prior to us getting in touch with them, we are already on top of it and we have answers for them right away. Customer service is one of our top priorities here. Being a small company, we have to compete against companies like Rackspace, Amazon and Microsoft, so customer service is one of the areas that we are able to compete against the larger companies. We can really give our customers the service that they need.

**CEOCFO:** *Do you find that the companies you deal with want more of that personal service and are happy to find it available?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** I think everyone wants to feel like they are the big fish and we can do that. Some of these big companies out there only want customers that multibillion dollar organization with thousands of employees, they do not want to talk to the SMB markets. For us, we take every one of our customers and we treat them as they are our largest. We are able to do that because we are a smaller organization.

**CEOCFO:** *Where do you think most of your customers fall short? Are there certain areas that overall they are not taking advantage of the way they should? How do you get people to understand not just what is nice to have but what is really needed?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** Every organization is a little different. Some are very up to date on the latest technologies and some are far behind. The area that you see changing the most is the CIOs, Network Admins, or VP of IT, this group is really starting to see is their jobs changing. The job of the CIO of an organization is now becoming one of not having to know how to do every little technical piece themselves but knowing where to outsource to and how they can get a service off premise by managing correctly. They are now really understanding their own industries vs. worrying about the day-to-day technology. This brings value to different organizations because now you have somebody who understands technology and can focus on the industry and the organization, thus so they know how to apply best technologies for the industry or organization vs. having to spend all their time managing say and exchange server or something like that. That is probably where most companies are lacking. It is having that type of personnel on staff that understands they should not be wasting their time dealing with the maintenance stuff when they can put it in a cloud somewhere and have somebody like Centuric do it. They should be focusing on what the best technologies are that they can use for their organization to grow and be successful.

**CEOCFO:** *What do you look for in your channel partners? As they are on the front line, how do you know they are representing Centuric properly or that they are doing the job you want as the first line of contact for your eventual customers?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** We go through a tough process with our channel partners, we do not just sign up anyone. I've seen some of our competitors brag that they have 2,000 channel partners signed up in six months. It's just not for us. We have a very qualified channel partner network that we work with and when someone becomes a channel partner with us, they go through a training process with us. We train them not only on the technical side thus we do require them to have technical staff for the most part. Aside from your basic referral type partners, we have our true technical partners that do the implementations and integrations. We do require them to have the right technical staff, we put them through technical training so they understand the ins and outs of our cloud network and we put them through a sales training process as well so they understand how to sell this and what they should be looking for. Most partners that we deal with come from a world of selling hardware. They are all good solutions sellers but they have gone out, sold big name hardware and then they set it up and walk away. Getting them to come over to a cloud environment is not difficult because they understand this is the direction of the industry. They still have the ability to do all the set ups and configurations and they get paid a residual on that as well because everything in the cloud is based off residual fees vs. one time hits. Our partners are really starting to understand that. We also go on calls with the. We do many presentations with our partners and give them marketing materials that they need. One of our engineers was in Puerto Rico last week meeting with a partner and helping

them do some presentations to their customers. We're not afraid to go on the front lines with them, so we are very much a hands on channel partner for them.

**CEOCFO:** *How is business currently?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** Business is good and is getting much better. Four or five years ago when we starting building out our infrastructure people did not want to talk about cloud. Today it is a very different world. Today the phone is ringing with prospects asking, "How can you help us? We need a cloud solution." Our partners tell us the same thing. I told some of our partners that they are making pretty good money selling server hardware, why they want to get out of that business. They say it's because their customers are coming to them asking them what their cloud solution is. Fortunately, Centuric is in a good place to be that solution for our partners so business is going very well.

**CEOCFO:** *How do you spend your time as CEO?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** I am a very hands-on type of CEO. I spend my days focusing on the sales and marketing effort because that is the mode we are in. Our CIO/CTO is an owner of the company and he really focuses most of his day on making sure our infrastructures stays not only up but growing because we're constantly adding and maintaining it. I mainly focus on the operations, marketing, and sales components. That is the most that is going on. There are constantly proposals out there and because everything is still new, we do have very set products and very set services but many of our partners and clients always need something special. Because we're not a big out the box type of company, we work with them. I spend a great amount of time looking at different solutions and how we can help out our customers.

**CEOCFO:** *Why should people look at Centuric?*
**Mr. Rodriguez:** We know what we're doing and have been doing it for a long time and understand it. We are a next generation IT company. When you start looking at many of the big companies out there, they are trying to figure out how they're going to fit into a cloud environment. We are already here and we know this industry and business, what our customers' needs are and we're here to help. We are on a high growth path.

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