

# REPORT REPRINT

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## Ensono takes its Hyperscale Cloud global

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The managed cloud service provider is looking to North America for additional opportunity, leveraging its acquisition of UK-based Attenda to provide new products and services to a wider client base.

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Ensono has launched its Hyperscale Cloud business unit, rolling out its managed AWS service on a global basis. Headquartered in Downers Grove, Illinois (a suburb of Chicago), the company reports that it has 20,000 servers and over 100,000 mainframe MIPS under management. Ensono is also ranked by The Uptime Institute, an operating division of The 451 Group, for 100% service availability. Tracing its roots back to 1969, the company re-branded in 2016, changing its name from Axciom IT to Ensono, following its sale to Charlesbank Capital Partners and M/C Partners in 2015. Although less well-known in Europe, Ensono has strong credentials in running business-critical workloads and application processes across mainframe, dedicated infrastructure and cloud platforms, with some high-profile customers in the financial, insurance and manufacturing sectors.

The company has adopted a full-stack approach to managed AWS, providing a range of managed services covering compute, storage, database and network requirements. Layers of security and automation are added to create a staged environment wrapped in a hybrid IT service management platform, Ensono M.O. Of note is Ensono's take on the notion of hybrid IT management, a process it considers consulting-led, providing change management, consistency across platforms and governance through automation.

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## THE 451 TAKE

Ensono has positioned itself as somewhat different from other providers with its mainframe business, DevOps capabilities and consulting-led approach. While each aspect is not unique, the combination of the three places the provider in a strong position when it comes to competing for complex application management opportunities. The integration of Attenda, which it acquired last year, appears to be proceeding well, and the leveraging of the target's managed AWS cloud offering brings further opportunities at a global level. Time will tell whether Ensono can make a success out of its Hyperscale Cloud in the more competitive North American market, but given the traction that Attenda has in the UK, the signs are positive.

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## CONTEXT

Hyperscale Cloud is Ensono's managed AWS offering, a business it gained along with the associated skills and technologies of Attenda, a firm that was one of the first certified AWS partners in Europe, creating a center of excellence for the cloud service in 2012. Ensono now has AWS certifications as both an AWS Advanced Consulting Partner for the public sector as well as for managed services. Further, the company has provided Hyperscale Cloud itself with a number of workload specializations, including for ERM giant SAP as well as Microsoft SQL Server and Windows. Hyperscale Cloud is delivered as a four- or five-stage digital transformation process roughly corresponding to defined AWS services, but with additional Ensono service management, consulting and migration, day-to-day operational management, service automation and reporting.

Ensono's consulting-led approach is based on two specific offerings: AWS Readiness Assessment, which is designed to ensure continuity while helping make informed recommendations about which workloads to potentially migrate, and AWS Proof of Concept. Day-to-day operations are provided via 'run and operate' activities designed to bring together change management, incident management, provisioning, patch management and access management as well as the management of access, security and continuity. It uses Atlassian's Bitbucket for code repository, HashiCorp's Terraform for orchestration tasks, and Ansible for configuration management. The whole is 'wrapped' with dedicated support and quarterly/monthly reviews and SLAs.

The company's approach to managed AWS automation is relatively advanced. Aside from features such as template-based deployment and auto-scaling of groups, Ensono offers CI/CD and DevOps support – including 'security as code'/DevSecOps – as part of an infrastructure designed to be reactive and self-heal. This 360-degree approach is also evident in Ensono's managed AWS reporting capabilities, where performance measurement aspects enable clients to assess the

business impact of AWS adoption, potentially helping them address cost optimization, security and infrastructure performance aspects. Ensono employs Datadog's cloud-scale application-monitoring platform in this process as well as AWS Trusted Advisor for cost, performance and security optimization.

## STRATEGY

Ensono's revenue is split roughly 70:30 between direct and channel sales. Its go-to-market partners include AWS and Sungard Availability Services and its technology partners include BMC, HPE and IBM for product enhancements. For the global launch of Hyperscale Cloud, the company notes that it plans a large marketing campaign in the UK that will focus on its capabilities in the management of SAP workloads and in the retail sector. It plans to replicate this approach in the US, starting in the Midwest. Clearly, there are opportunities to introduce Hyperscale Cloud to existing enterprise customers, and Ensono plans to do this face to face with each one.

The company is also keen to point out that it is hiring – it is currently advertising about 40 US-based vacancies on its website, ranging from engineering and service delivery roles to marketing and product management, including a number of openings in the Hyperscale Cloud division.

## COMPETITION

Ensono is not the only cloud service provider offering managed AWS. Aside from Rackspace and Datapipe, Attenda faces increasing competition from those aiming to develop their third-party cloud service management and hybrid IT capabilities for midmarket firms, including the likes of Pulsant, Six Degrees Groups and others. Some UK-based providers such as Claranet have already established a pan-European business and are likely to react. Ensono itself already vies with a variety of vendors in Europe such as IBM, HPE (although it considers IBM and HPE strategic partners rather than rivals), Atos, HDS and T-Systems. Other contenders that combine consulting and training with managed services include well-established India-based IT suppliers such as HCL Technologies, TCS and Wipro. Ensono admits that competition also comes from DIYers desiring high levels of customization and control.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

### STRENGTHS

With solid investment behind it and several successful business units to its name, Ensono has a stack of managed service credentials and long-term clients. Attenda provides reach and scale into Europe, something that would have otherwise been difficult to achieve.

### WEAKNESSES

Outside of the US, the company is less well-known, partially due to its re-branding, as well as its geographic focus - it will need to work hard to convince potential customers that it has solid AWS credentials from the Attenda acquisition in particular.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Attenda's managed AWS service has been carefully incorporated and has some solid reference clients that can be leveraged to gain new logos. This will also provide opportunities for cross-selling to established customers in the US.

### THREATS

In both the US and the UK, competition for managed AWS is heating up, and there are several established players - especially in North America - with deep pockets that will want to protect their existing client base.