

*Working with Business Partners for the benefit of the customer*

*Business Partners and IBM:  
a cast-iron combination*

Two years ago, when IBM launched its mid-market approach for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the company began investing in a specific type of organization that specialized in this customer segment. Ever since, by working with these “Business Partners” and providing them with better support, IBM has sought to increase its accessibility to customers by offering them a range of cost-effective solutions.

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Very often, the cooperation between Business Partners and IBM allows them to create significant added value for customers, as was the case recently in its partnership with Cats and Dogs.

### Mid-market approach via Business Partners

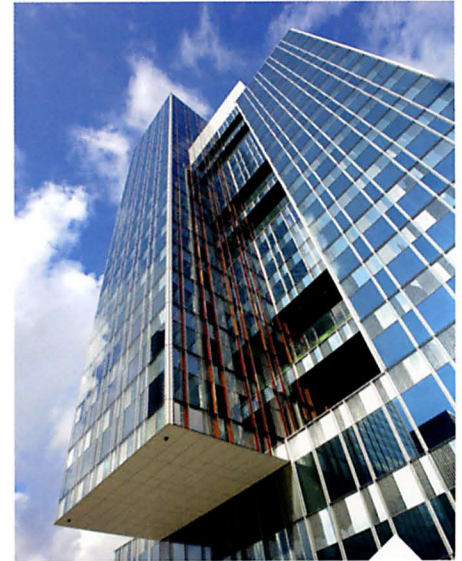
“The mid-market segment represents a major share of the market in the Benelux, covering approximately 20,000 companies,” explains Luc Driesen, Mid-Market Sales Leader BeNeLux. “IBM services customers in this segment via its Business Partners. In practical terms, that means IBM makes its products and services available to the Business Partners, who in turn are then able to offer a total solution to the end-customer. Establishing this in-depth cooperation with our Business Partners enables us to be in closer contact with SMEs, as well as adapt our products to fit in perfectly with that particular market.” IBM works with a number of Business Partners in Belgium, one of which is Cats & Dogs, a provider of total solutions in the field of IT infrastructures. “Cats & Dogs aims to create IT environments that have added value for SMEs, by seeking out the right balance of services for the consumer between a flexible infrastructure, business continuity and disaster recovery, skills transfer and return on investment,” explains Bart Wolfs, Director of Cats & Dogs. “Consequently, our solutions go much further than just maintaining and optimizing the customer’s infrastructure and network.

The collaborative model between Cats & Dogs and the end-customer creates a win-win situation for both parties.”

### Added value for everyone

This added value is taken even further through the provider’s excellent working relationship with IBM. As a Business Partner, Cats & Dogs is able to deploy IBM technology, enabling it to offer customers reliable and cost-effective solutions. “First and foremost, the tools IBM provides us with are both top quality and honestly priced, which means we can meet our customers’ technical, financial and functional expectations,” says Wolfs. “A very important element in this is IBM’s Energy Management, because consolidation and energy consumption are two major areas of our total package. So, as with IBM, ‘Green ICT’ plays a major role in the solutions we provide.”

“The level of added value is high,” confirms Luc Driesen. “We supply our products to Cats & Dogs and they then handle the task of outlining and implementing the solution, and are able to provide their end-customers with cost-effective, total solutions. It’s a win-win situation for everyone.” Bart Wolfs believes that it was openness that played the significant role when Cats & Dogs decided to work with IBM. “During our discussions, I could see that transparency was just a given in the way IBM approached the market, and that kind of openness is something we also strive to achieve with our



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customers,” he says. “We have been an IBM Business Partner for two years now and we work together outstandingly well – and, of course, that good relationship with IBM can only go on to benefit our customers.”

### Cooperation brings cost-effective solution to Belgo Metal

The agreement IBM signed recently with Belgo Metal in Wetteren is a good example of how that cooperation has paid dividends for customers. Belgo Metal is part of the Kyotec Group and supplies designs for high-quality building projects in Belgium and other countries. The contract covers the replacement of the old server infrastructure, made up of DELL hardware, with an IBM BladeCenter S, which delivers ultra-high performance

## Challenge

To centralize and simplify the server infrastructure, virtualization, implementation of disaster recovery.

## Solution

IBM BladeCenter S.

## Core benefits

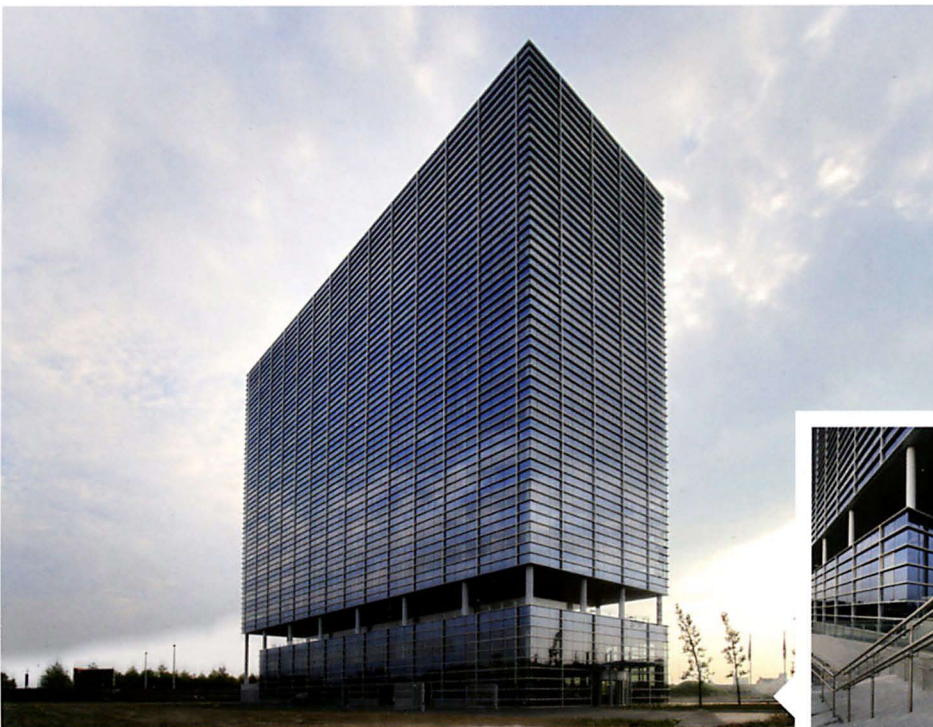
Central and shared remote management, single point of contact, cost-effective, limited downtime, transparency and transfer of skills.

at an affordable price. The IBM hardware will replace all of the existing servers, as well as providing software services to 130 employees and designers in over 20 locations, at home and abroad. In addition, the virtualization process will make centralized management possible and reduce the complexity of the overall infrastructure.

It was a job that Cats and Dogs was ready to take on for IBM. "The added

value that we provide here is in several areas," says Bart Wolfs. "First of all, we want to minimize downtime as much as possible by implementing a functional disaster recovery plan: If something goes wrong, the software processes still remain accessible and no data is ever lost, while having an off-site backup system guarantees continuity. We also provide a flexible infrastructure dictated by the needs of the client company, not our own, which can be done without increasing costs. A third point to which we attach a great deal of attention is the transfer of skills: We share our knowledge with the IT managers at Belgo Metal, giving them new insights into dealing with problem resolution. Managing the IT infrastructure is also shared with the customer's IT management. Here again, we seek to achieve a total solution that means we work in line with the customer's needs. The result is an appropriately sized solution that includes all hardware and software components, complete with licences, as well as implementation of the entire project."

Luc Driesen completes the picture: "Ultimately, it is up to the Business Partner to demonstrate that they have the ability to deliver a cost-effective total solution," he says. Indeed, the main reason behind Belgo Metal's decision to opt for this solution was the right price. "We thought that in view of its value for money and quality, the solution that Cats & Dogs had to offer us was the best choice," agrees the CFO at Belgo Metal, Dirk Steyaert. "The transfer of skills – and hence the transparency of the whole arrangement – also played a major part because it meant that, as the customer, we could continue to maintain direct control over the entire process. Finally, implementation took place in March and was completed in just two weeks – and that kind of speed and responsiveness really helps to make a deal like this work." ■



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