

# July 08 Tech Meeting

Key highlights & synthesis



# Background

## Attendees

July 08 Tech meeting took place in London on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of July.

### Attending:

- FR – Cama Cissoko
- FR – Sebastien Sejourne
- DE – Markus Bach
- DE – Johannes Ploetner
- NL – Robin Douven
- ES – Josep Salom
- PT – Joao Folgado
- Group/HSC – Stephen Richards
- Group/NSC – David Freedman
- Group/MIS – Nigel Connolly
- Group/Solutions – Martin Saunders
- Group/Solutions – Chris Journeay
- Group – Olivier Beaudet

### Not attending:

- UK – Mike Rogers
- UK – Jason Keen

This document presents the key highlights, decisions, recommendations and “next steps” discussed and agreed during this Technical Meeting.

## Agenda & key focus

Prior to the Tech Meeting, TDs have been provided with a full Information pack to read. This Information pack contains details and documentation around concepts that we discussed during the Technical Meeting itself.

The agenda has mainly focused on:

- Technology (Alchemy, Monitoring, new tools, Virtual Data Centre, etc...)
- Process (ITIL, Automation, release management)
- People (Set up virtual teams across the group, swap staff programme, etc...)

# Network Service Centre

## Presentation & discussion

- Claranet Network: update on recent upgrades. Weather map is now all green!
- Single AS (IEVCA) complete! All countries have migrated onto the single AS now.
- CAIN: Update on the project. Scope, objectives and next steps presented.
- IPv6: “awareness slides” and roadmap presented to countries, up to 2012.
- Network costing Model. Providing accurate and flexible costing to countries.

*See slides for more details.*

## Details & next steps

### Single AS

- Phase 1 is now complete.
- Phase 2 (project CLIP) involves a re-write of each individual routing policy, and hence community structure. This must be a fully collaborative process.

### CAIN

- Next steps are to roll out new firewalls, and set-up Cain in each individual country.
- Again, community structure, and collaborative process should be defined.
- If countries are willing to collaborate, this should be completed by November 08.

### IPv6

- NSC & HSC already provide “IPv6” ready infrastructure.
- Both NSC & HSC can provide help and advices on how to migrate local infrastructures to IPv6 (DNS, etc...).

### Network Costing Model

- Networks costs are today carried mostly by the UK, and each individual country usually pay only for its peering links, and sometimes for some dedicated links.
- A new model would be to have Group carrying all costs, and re-charging individual countries, based on a simple but still accurate model each individual country.
- The objective is to keep it simple, flexible, and cost effective.
- Based on the costing model presented and discussed during the tech meeting, the actual cost per Mbs would be **€8.60**.
- Next steps:
  - Double check with each individual country allocation assumptions, exact cost of each line, and accuracy of the model.
  - Come up with an agreed model for FY09 (retroactively in force from 1<sup>st</sup> July 08).

## Synthesis

More and more Network related projects need collaboration between countries and centralised steering to ensure alignment. Therefore the set-up of a “Network virtual team” would help to support all “next steps” in a consistent and effective manner.

*See also “Virtual Team workshop”*

# Hosting Service Centre

## Presentation & discussion

- Update on HSC key roles and responsibilities.
- Description of technical infrastructures
- Update on recent roll-outs, and future plans
- Costing approach (on going)
- Group-wide Exchange project
- Virtual Private Data-centre

*See slides for more details.*

## Details & next steps

Group-wide exchange project.

- Presentation of the concept and a prospective technical plan.
- Presentation and discussion of the benefits of such a solution.
- Roundtable to get feedback and interest in such a solution.
- All countries agreed on the interest of the solution, and all want to join the project.
- Next steps for HSC:
  - Turn the technical plan into a proper project plan with dates and costs.

Virtual Data Centre

- Presentation of the concept
- Demo of a tested solution (Q-Layer)
- Workshop on interest/questions.
- VDC was received as a highly interesting project by Technical Directors, the following potential limitations have been raised during the workshop:
- Scope of VDC v1 should address:
  1. P2V, V2P: One systems have been deployed on a virtual infrastructure (even one virtual machine to one physical machine), the customer requirements may become so complex that the whole infrastructure has to be moved to physical machines. Can this be done? how? easily? What sort of issues would warrant this?
  2. Provisioning to a specific box / model: Does Q-layer enable you to specify a particular box or model as a target for deployment?
  3. Hardware Independence: Can you move an image which has been created and tested on, say, an HP machine to a Dell? From intel to AMD? Can this be done under v-motion?
  4. Can you specify the class of service? I.e. that this is to get priority allocation of memory, processing power, etc?? Can this be built in to a template?
  5. Ditto as regards I/O resources.
  6. Everything 64-bit?
  7. Can Q-layer be used to attach new nodes to an existing MPLS solution?
  8. Backups, snapshots, etc: What functionality can be defined as part of the template? What are it's effects on performance? How would this be managed?
  9. Topology Configuration: Can Qlayer be used to configure: Firewalls, Load Balancers, multiple zones, traffic priority, special routes (e.g. ability to access a box from within the network, routed as though you were coming in from outside - for testing purposes)?
  10. Define the border between solutions that can be installed / managed with q-layer, and those that have to be done manually
  11. Investigate how to deal with special cards: e.g ISDN, X25, remote management, etc
  12. Investigate inventory management: how to keep track of hundreds of machines, how to know where there is spare capacity, etc, etc,
- Next steps for HSC:
  - Bring Proof of Concept up to the scope defined above.

# Group MIS

## Presentation & discussion

- Update on MIS key roles and responsibilities / organisation chart going forward
- “To become the Claranet Group’s, trusted advisor and implementation partner with regards to Management Information Systems, Update on recent roll-outs, and future plans”
- Rules of engagement, how countries could/should engage and work with MIS.
- Key projects review
- Specific focus on:
  - Messina
  - Alchemy
  - Cognos
  - Monitoring (Zoom on the existing solution in Germany).

*See slides for more details.*

## Details & next steps

### Alchemy

- Reasons for the change
- Scope of Alchemy (What is in, what is not)
- Approach & vision
- Short list selection review (IFS, Microsoft, Sage, Oracle)
- Review project plan and roadmap (project structure, team, etc...)
- Discussion:
  - How TDs want to be involved?
    - Get minutes from steering committee.
    - Be aware of any major update or milestone reached (newsletter?).
- Next steps.
  - Steering committee to go ahead as per the plan, and communicate each key milestones to all TDs.

### Monitoring

- Presentation of the UK project (Requirements, specifications, update on the project)
- Roundtable on existing solutions and approach to the Specs as defined.
  - Most countries (except DE) consider their existing solution as nearly “end of life”, and not really of the market standard, especially for customer views (reporting).
  - All countries would be happy with a solution that covers the Specs as defined. Therefore these specs could be considered as relevant for Group requirements.
- German project.
  - Germany has recently rolled-out a home grown solution based on Nagios 3 (open source), which has been presented to all Technical Directors.
  - All attendees agreed that this solution was by far the most advanced amongst the existing solutions.
  - Germany supports this solution to become a Group standard.
  - “Customer view” and “reporting” may be less attractive than off-the-shelf package, though (ex Highlight, used as a test in the UK at the moment).
- Next steps.
  - John Naughton will be adding “Claranet DE solution” as part of the potential provider for the UK solution, and will go on as per the project plan.
  - Other countries have no rush to join the UK project at that stage, and wait for the next steps to potentially join.

# Virtual Teams

## Background

On top of having Tech meetings with tech directors 3 times a year, most TDs have raised the need for more exchange between teams across the group, at a more practical and technical level.

Objectives of the workshop session we had during the Tech meeting:

- Define the shape and objectives of virtual teams (who attends, when, to do what, etc...).
- Ideally agree and define the next 2 to 3 VT.

## Outcome of the workshop

### Objectives & benefits of such virtual teams:

2 different categories

- “Peers virtual teams”: making peers meeting together.
- “Projects virtual teams”: set-up a team for a dedicated project when collaboration is required.

**[People]** HR benefits (recruiting and retaining talents)

- Feeling to belong to a group (not concrete for most of them today).
- Ability to work with peers and learn from them.
- Ability to travel abroad with the company, and therefore feel more important to the business.

**[Process]** Operational alignment benefits

- Improve process and share best practices at a practical level (not only top management)
- Share experiences and initiatives.
- Ensure a better alignment on initiatives and technology choices.
- Facilitate communication for further exchanges (people know each other and it becomes more natural for them to make phone calls when needed).
- Get things done through practical teams, in charge of specific projects.

### How it would work:

- 1 leading country per virtual team.
- Lead country to host, and Tech Director of local country to chair.
- Opt'in when possible (some specific projects may not be of interest to all countries)
- All opt'in countries pick a “champion”
- Get an audience as homogeneous as possible.
- Max team is 8 (1 TD + 7 champions).

### Suggested virtual teams, as per TDs needs:

- **[People/Technology] Network team**  
Collaborative practical work on CAIN, IEVCA step2, IPv6 migration, etc...  
Potentially chaired by NSC.
- **[Technology] Alchemy**  
Chaired by Group MIS, 1 champion per country  
Champions of each country, to follow the project, anticipate implementation, learn from other countries, etc...
- **[Technology] Monitoring**  
Ensure

- **[Process] ITIL**  
Define common language, Claranet ITIL “bible”, review customer facing process documentation, focus on specific topics on each session to define frameworks and generic approach (event mngt, incident mngt, problem mngt, etc...)  
*See ITIL workshop outcomes to complement.*
- **[Technology] Virtualisation & Virtual Data Centre**  
Potentially a small team, chaired by HSC, to move from PoC to v1.

**Other suggested virtual teams:**

- DNS & Volume hosting
- Security management
- International projects management

# ITIL

## Background

Defining & sharing common processes has been extensively discussed during our last tech meeting in Val d'Isere. We will go one step forward, reviewing the key principles & definitions that we should share, following ITIL

Objectives of the workshop session we had during the Tech meeting:

- Define what should be a common approach of ITIL for Claranet as a Group, considering the differences between countries, in terms of size, portfolio, existing process, ability to invest, etc...
- Define the next steps towards a common approach of ITIL

## Outcome of the workshop

**Objectives of a common ITIL implementation (rather than a 100% locally managed one):**

- Define a common language for Claranet as a business when it comes to process.
- Share customer facing documentation (support process, change management, etc...)
- Get as most common processes as possible, and share documentation efforts.
- Rely on a unique "Claranet ITIL workbook" that would contain definitions, and high-level process descriptions.

**Next steps:**

- **Programme manager and champions to be named.**  
One person to drive and coordinate the programme at a group level (ITIL programme manager), and each country to name a "champion" for ITIL implementation and continual improvement.  
Ideally this champion would take responsibility of a CSI role in each individual country. This is not necessarily a full-time job, especially for smaller countries.
- **TDs and/or local champions to attend the foundation course for ITIL v3 in August/September.**  
Most of technical directors have not gone through any kind of training/awareness for ITIL 3 so far. Ideally all SMTs attend an awareness day training as well, to ensure that ITIL is understood across the business, and not only at a technical level.
- Proper kick-off of an ITIL group project at the next Tech Meeting (October 08).  
All TDs should have the same level of information/awareness of what it is ITIL v3 by then.
- **Post kick-off objectives (ITIL team objectives)**  
The first objectives of the ITIL programme team will be:

- **Write a "Claranet ITIL workbook" v1**, to ensure common languages and common framework.
- **Review service processes** (list of all relevant processes to be well defined for Claranet) and define priorities (event mngt, incident mngt, request mngt, release mngt, etc...).

**Ongoing role of the ITIL team:**

- For each of these key processes, set-up workshops and ongoing improvements amongst the ITIL team to:
  - Describe and document the process in itself.
  - Get a related customer facing documentation done.
  - Improve it overtime.
  - Ensure its local implementation through training.



# Swap staff program

## Background

Always mentioned as an obvious good idea to motivate and retain technical staff, to learn from each other, to leverage skills across the group, etc... this has been proven to be very difficult to implement. Objectives of the workshop session we had during the Tech meeting:

- Define and agree on principles that could rule such a program to make it possible and efficient (how long, how many people, etc...).
- Define the principles from an operational point of view, and let the legal framework for HR.

## Outcome of the workshop

**Objectives of such a program are roughly the same than the virtual teams:**

- Feeling to belong to a group (not concrete for most of them today).
- Ability to work with peers and learn from them.
- Ability to travel abroad with the company, and therefore feel more important to the business.
- Learn from other countries processes, technical knowledge, etc...
- Facilitate further practical exchanges between 2 countries.

### **Suggested principles**

- Initiative should be driven by the “sending country” rather than the “receiving country” in terms of:
  - Objectives of the mission (understand a process, learn a technology,
  - Country destination
  - Who to send / profile
  - Duration / scheduleBoth sending countries and receiving countries should see benefit in the exchange (learning curve for the sending country, additional resource for the receiving country).
- Suggested guidelines for a successful exchange
  - Volunteers only.
  - 1 staff at a time (no swap, but one-way only)
  - Duration: from 1 to 3 month.
  - Workload: 70% for the local country (receiving), 30% remote work for the sending country.
  - Reporting line: report to the local manager during the period of the exchange.
  - Mainly for non customer facing roles.

All Technical Directors would be keen to send some of their technical staff to another chosen country, with a clear and defined objective within that framework.

# Release management

## Background

Demand from MAH customers is becoming clearer on what they want us to manage, and what they want to keep the control of. The only reason for customers to request for “root access” is to keep autonomy on releases management. They want to be able to manage releases whenever they want... Based on this common request from customers, a defined framework could be set-up and sold as part of Claranet solution, for each MAH project:

- Provide a pre-production environment (virtual servers), with root access shared with the customer.
- Provide a “release management interface” for customers, to allow them to be autonomous on new releases of their application.

This tool would basically be script based, and would follow the following sequence:

- Check pre-prod environment
- Backup existing prod environment to allow easy and fast roll-back
- Release the new version
- log the release.

On top of that, this interface would allow customers and Claranet engineers to log, track and rollback releases.

Objectives of the workshop session we had during the Tech meeting:

- Discuss the concept of this application, define scope, ownership and timescale of the project

## Outcome of the workshop

**Objectives of such a program are roughly the same than the virtual teams:**

- This is of interest mainly for MAH customers, FR, UK and DE though at the moment.
- UK technical Director was not attending this session, then UK interest for it has yet to be defined.
- Germany consider that their MAH customers request some manual process at the moment, and don't see any urgency to use such a tool, but is interested in the output anyway.
- France pushes for this, as they see it as an urgent requirement to enhance the level of service to some customers, while reducing the time allocated to these customers in the same time.
- HSC has recently investigated such tools, and feel it is required for the UK as well (5 TV deal).

**Next steps:**

- Project commonly managed by HSC and France
- HSC to investigate options, especially using Capistrano, and come back to France with findings (beginning of September).
- France & HSC to agree a way forward, potentially:
  - France allocate 1 developer as a resource for the project
  - HSC allocate resource as well
  - Project plan, and development done jointly by HSC and France.

# Conclusion

## Next steps

### Technical Directors

- Communication to all technical local staff on Group projects, updates, and priorities to ensure
- Training ITIL foundation v3
- Name a champion for ITIL implementation

### Group

- Review all suggestions with MDs and Group meeting to make decisions
- Name a Group ITIL program manager
- Schedule the next tech meeting (Ideally October), with a proper Group ITIL program kick-off.