

# Q9 CUSTOMERS THRIVE ON WELL-DEFINED, RELIABLE, AND SECURE PLATFORMS



➔ From co-location to specialized infrastructure services, Q9 provides its customers with a range of platform options for hosting mission-critical computing environments. All of Q9's customers rely on Q9's state-of-the-art data centres as a base platform for their IT operations. In addition, many also leverage Q9's 7 x 24 onsite experts to build, monitor and maintain a hardware computing platform consisting of servers, firewalls, load balancers, back-up and storage devices, etc., for their specific IT applications. Whether a customer relies on Q9 for an entire computing platform or just a few select infrastructure services depends entirely on where they want to focus their resources.

"The term 'managed services' has become quite muddy," says David Ralston, Senior VP, Sales at Q9 Networks. "To some, it implies systems administration or DBA services, to others it suggests outsourcing the entire IT department. We use the term infrastructure services to distinguish what we do from managed services. When a customer asks us to provide them with a server or storage array, they aren't looking for us to take over their applications. They are looking for us to provide them with the same platform experience that we deliver through our co-location services. They need a rock-solid foundation for their applications."

Using Q9's infrastructure services, customers leverage Q9's expertise through a suite

of offerings that allows them to retain ownership and control of their business applications and the policies that are important to their operations. Q9 buys the computing infrastructure (the hardware), installs it, monitors it, and fixes it when it breaks. In other words, Q9 keeps the hardware platform up and running while the customer focuses on developing and managing their business applications.

"Q9 focuses on computing infrastructure services at such a level that the services are not unique to a given business or customer," says Rick Morton, Senior VP, Product Engineering. "As a result, Q9 customers focus their time and talents on the tasks that really are unique to their business, and that require

a deep understanding of their business issues."

Q9 sees these infrastructure services as the combination of many elements: reliable data centre capacity to house the services, matching services to each customer's specific requirements, as well as extensive deployment and operating expertise.

## EXPERTISE FOR A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC APPROACH

Q9's infrastructure services team sees themselves as customers of Q9's data centre services.

"We use the same co-location services that Q9's co-location customers use," says Morton. "Q9's high-availability data centres underpin our highly-reliable infrastructure services deployments."

Technical expertise is a must. At Q9 it starts with Customer Solutions Architects (CSAs), a valuable resource to ensure that customer needs are addressed.

"Our CSAs have come up through the ranks, and have from 7 to 12 years experience with real systems," says Morton. "They have seen many customer environments; these are the people who engage with the customer and identify the issues that the customer needs to consider."

Daily operations are handled by Control Centre Analysts and Data Centre Technicians who oversee the operation of infrastructure services on a 7 x 24 basis.

"These are the staff who monitor our infrastructure services," adds Morton. "They do the break fix tasks that are



required when things go wrong, and implement the add, move, change requests that customers need to run their applications.”

Q9’s extensive suite of infrastructure services includes servers and storage, network elements like switches, routers, and load balancers, security offerings like firewalls and VPN tunnels, and backup and restore services. Before any of these services can be made available to a customer, Q9 selects the appropriate equipment, then purchases and inventories it all before moving it into the data centre and cabling it all up.

Once all the gear is in place, Q9 integrates it with its monitoring and authentication systems to ensure that when things fail, Q9 will detect the problem and react rapidly. Q9’s on-site sparing and repair strategy combined with its backup and restore services are the final critical elements in minimizing the impact of the inevitable device and component failures.

**A DISCIPLINED APPROACH**

Infrastructure services can be divided into two classes of service: one where the customer retains ownership of the policies but not the operation of the device (e.g. a firewall) and one where the customer is involved in the operation of the device (e.g. a server).

When a customer contracts for a Q9 firewall service, Q9 takes full responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the device, including keeping the software up-to-date, backing up the configuration, and implementing a customer’s policy requests (e.g. change a rule at 4:00 AM on a Tuesday morning). When a customer subscribes to Q9’s server infrastructure services, the customer retains ownership and responsibility for the operating system and the business applications.

“We focus on the computing infrastructure so that customers can focus their talents on the applications that are specific to their businesses,” says Ralston. “Our expertise is in monitoring and maintaining their server,

storage, security and network infrastructure.”

This approach also allows for a service model that delivers within well-defined parameters, ensuring that Q9 gives its customers precisely what they expect.



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**David Ralston,  
Senior VP, Sales, Q9**

“We are very disciplined about how we set customer expectations,” says David Chaloner, Senior VP, Marketing at Q9. “When we tell our customers that we will do something, that is exactly what

we will do. We feel it is crucial to our mutual success that we emphasize a clear understanding of what we are responsible for, and what the customer is responsible for.”

“Depending on their business, it’s logical for some of our customers to run their own computing infrastructure, and our co-location services make sense for them,” adds Ralston. “But others have chosen to focus more closely on their core business applications, and rely on us to provide them with a deeper foundation.”

Whether for co-location or infrastructure services, Q9 is in a position to ensure customers get the best possible service. Sometimes that means a combination of co-location services and infrastructure services.

“A hybrid co-location/infrastructure services approach is also popular,” says Chaloner. “Often our co-location customers choose to buy and operate their servers, but turn to Q9 to provide the storage, networking, security, or off-site backup infrastructure, which often requires staff with more specialized skills who are monitoring and responding to issues on a 7 x 24 basis.”

This is all part of a larger, ongoing trend wherein enterprises are looking for the best way to focus their IT resources on delivering real advantages to their enterprise.

“There will come a day when few businesses will actually buy and operate their own computing platforms,” says Ralston, “just as today no-one writes their own database software from scratch.”

It makes sense. Customers who rely on infrastructure services can focus on their business applications, knowing that Q9 has the equipment, people, and processes at the ready to ensure their computing platforms are always available.

