Q + A

David Giambruno
Senior VP and CIO at Revlon

Beauty and the cloud

David Giambruno is senior VP and CIO at Revlon, a global cosmetics and personal care powerhouse based in New York City. Leading the company's internal cloud deployment—which has resulted in dramatic efficiencies that include 99.9999 percent uptime and significant cost avoidance and savings over two years—

Giambruno is responsible for wielding technology in the service of a consumer products business. He is also a huge fan of asking his employees to "just try."

Q: *How does your organization use technology to foster collaboration?*

A: We've been intelligently refreshing IT throughout Revlon. One concept we've implemented

is simplicity, which we call *oneness*: having just one of anything to drive operating efficiencies. We have one set of global access controls and we wanted one set of servers, so we went with Dell™ servers worldwide. When we are done, there will be no other servers in Revlon. Literally, we have one fan.

Once we refreshed our infrastructure—which had its own set of benefits—our speed to deployment kept getting faster. One great case in point: When a vendor comes out with patches, our mean time to patch is 17 minutes, globally.

Simplifying our infrastructure enabled us to get IT out of the way of the business. My job is to make systems work for people, rather than make people work for the systems. I need to provide good, actionable information to leadership and business teams around the world, so they can make decisions that drive the business.

The role of IT is like a tablet computer. A tablet is a piece of glass that users just want to tap on; they don't care how it works. Similarly, end users of our technology typically don't care what they use or how it works; they just want their information delivered seamlessly.

So in the first 18 months we concentrated on building this foundation of oneness; then in the second 18 months we focused on building our cloud.

Q: *You've been ahead of many organizations in your journey toward the cloud. Tell us a little about that migration.*

A: As part of our infrastructure rebuild and technology simplification, we performed a

huge server refresh. But instead of buying 600 servers, I bought only 70. We built what we internally refer to as the DRIB, our "disaster recovery in a box." This became our cloud capacity and we shipped the DRIBs around the world. Then we started virtualizing our servers.

I'm a crawl-walk-run person, so first we virtualized file servers, which was low impact; no one really noticed anything.

And then we continued to move up the stack until today, when 98 percent of our compute power is in our internal cloud. Now pretty much everything, including our enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, sits in our cloud, except for a few legacy systems and a database or two.

For 18 months, we virtualized and ended up with 531 apps in our cloud. Through the cloud transition we have turned screws for continuous improvement. When we first went live, the ratio of physical servers to virtual servers was 1:7. We have wielded the technology to get to a 1:34 ratio this year. That's nearly a 500 percent increase in capacity with no additional cost. Now our cloud makes 15,000 automated moves a month with no human intervention and 14,000 transactions a second with 17–30 TB of data changes a week.

Our data center has become a soccer field. You can literally kick a ball around in the data center without being in danger of hitting anything critical. Even if you did take out a server, the apps would automatically migrate without end users noticing.

Q: *The cloud seems to work because your master data*

management works. How long did that take?

A: Two-and-a-half years. And let's be honest, it was tough. But unless you do it this way, you have to spend a lot of money.

Q: *Have there been downsides along the way?*

A: Downsides are relative. For example, we've created more work for ourselves. As we worked with our master data, we realized we could address big data. Instead of mining unstructured data, we could structure our data on the way and classify our existing data.

We also had unintended consequences, such as when we reduced data center power by 72 percent and our condensers froze. We realized that they were freezing because there wasn't enough heat in the data center anymore and we had to move stuff around to heat them up.

Q: *What's the Next Big Thing?*

A: We are working to stream our applications to any device securely. When we stream the application, data will not leave the data center and it will not reside on a device. Instead, end users will view the application. Because this approach changes the corporate security model, we can literally encrypt the entire data center now, which really helps with compliance issues. We're not a bank, so we don't need to be Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant. And we're not a health-care company, so we don't need to comply with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations. But we must comply with the

Sarbanes–Oxley (SOX) Act and some Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations.

Another benefit to this project is that it avoids data leakage and data walking away on devices. Those security compromises are gone, which is great.

There's also a tremendous need for what we think of as *cellular applications*. These applications can make copies of transactions, processes, or functions that are needed in another location because latency is still the killer on the network. For example, we have a factory in South Africa. I want to be able to take my ERP system, which is a single instance, copy all my warehouse manufacturing processes, push them to the South Africa site, and then have my cloud manage the transaction back. This helps ensure an optimal user experience by using the cloud, rather than an application or a server, to move functionality. I think cellular applications are three to five years down the road.

Q: *Is there a push-pull between what upper management expects and what your end users expect?*

A: If there was, I wouldn't be doing my job. I continuously work to deliver new capabilities to wow my users. I do that by wielding technology for a competitive advantage, never forgetting that I am here to help, and bringing it all together to thrill my customers so they can thrill theirs and grow Revlon. We have a global project management office that delivers what the business wants with less than a 1 percent failure rate.