



**servent** 

Servent Partners with SUSE to  
Create New Linux-on-Public  
Cloud Revenue Streams

## Servent

### Industry and Location

Managed Service Providers | Scotland

### Product(s) and Service(s)

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications  
SUSE Manager

# Success Story

## At-a-Glance

One of the top Microsoft Azure specialist MSPs in the UK, Servent, is ready to capitalize on a brand-new market opportunity. Specialized in data center migration to the Microsoft Azure public cloud platform, Servent is primed to become one of the few players that help companies migrate to and run large Linux operating systems on Azure. Shrewd in its partnership strategy, Servent has selected SUSE as it's a strategic Linux partner because of SUSE's deep alliance and technical integration with SAP, 100% open approach, and world-class support.

## Introducing Servent

As companies around the world look to hasten their journeys to the cloud, demand is rapidly growing for expert managed service providers (MSPs) who can smoothly and expeditiously lead customers through the migration process.

Growing desire for rapid digital transformation and cloud migration is prompting the growth of the managed services industry and cloud migration partners. Recognizing the opportunity to create an expert Azure partner, in 2014, aspiring entrepreneur Des McGuire created one of the very few pure play Microsoft Azure partners in the UK. Since then, in partnership with SUSE, Servent has become one of the few expert Azure partners capable of helping companies migrate Linux to Azure.



"The primary reason for moving to the cloud is simply the innovation that the cloud brings." Des McGuire, Founder & Azure Solutions Director, Servent

The company he created, Servent, is a textbook example for starting a business. Leaning on his 25 years of experience as a Microsoft consultant, Des McGuire founded an agile MSP that could offer companies a much-needed guiding hand in their journey to the cloud. Specifically, he wanted to specialize in helping customers migrate their data centers to Azure Cloud.

"I wanted to create an expert Azure partner in Scotland so, in 2014, I took the plunge," says McGuire. "I have a very deep network in Microsoft, which I tapped into to establish the company. As a result, we are the top Azure partner in Scotland, hands down, and one of the few pure play Azure Partners in the UK."

Working in the Microsoft infrastructure space throughout his career, McGuire witnessed firsthand the evolution of data center technology—from mainframes to private clouds. When the public cloud emerged, he knew this was a game-changer. It didn't take long before McGuire recognized the

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**Des McGuire**  
Founder & Azure Solutions Director  
Servent

importance that SAP, and open source technologies, would also have on his customers. Naturally, Servent’s alliance with SUSE soon followed.

### **The Journey to Open Source**

McGuire’s instincts proved correct. Less than 10 years after Servent was born, its customer count is set to double in the next fiscal year. As businesses in all sectors seek to hasten cloud migration, Servent has carved a hugely successful niche.

In particular, the growing interest in SAP and Linux has been prompted by some of the largest energy and retail brands. As a result of this demand, Servent became one of the first to help these customers run SUSE Linux Enterprise Server (SLES) to host SAP applications in their Azure deployments.

Servent embraced open source technologies while serving its first customer, an international energy company based in the UK (also one of Microsoft’s biggest customers in the region). “Given our deep level of Azure expertise,” explains McGuire, “We

helped them with their data center migration to Azure, along with an SAP ECC to SAP S/4HANA greenfield deployment in Azure on SUSE Linux. That’s how we got involved with SAP and SUSE, and when we realized how valuable these skill sets would be.”

In the years that followed, Servent continued to assist clients with migrating their data center to Azure cloud. “We focus on the data center because that’s where the nuts and bolts of everything is,” says McGuire. “That’s what customers want to move, and since nobody wants to build or run one, that’s what we do.”

It wasn’t until Servent began working with a top-tier retailer that this new market opportunity crystallized. As the customer wanted to offload Azure management to an MSP that could host a greenfield SAP S/4HANA system in Azure cloud, McGuire needed to work with a Linux operating system once again.

“For as long as we’ve been involved in the SAP world, Microsoft has been pushing the Linux-on-Azure story,” he reflects. “More

than half of the workloads in Azure are Linux-based. The reality is (and this is our ethos), if it runs in Azure, we'll help you run it," says McGuire.

Working with Linux and partnering with SUSE, McGuire and the team created a completely new revenue stream. "There are very few Azure partners who can demonstrate how to run Linux effectively on Azure, and not just from an SAP perspective," says McGuire. "That's the reason we got into it, because of the experience we've had with SAP."

### Creating New Markets

Having cornered a major market opportunity, Servent is looking to expand this capability and bring its customers along for the ride. Over the next six to nine years, all enterprises using legacy SAP ERP systems will be required to migrate onto SAP S/4HANA. In other words, potentially 35 thousand existing customers will be migrating at least a portion of their data center within the next few years. But that's not all. SAP signs on approximately 1,000 new SAP HANA and SAP S/4HANA customers every year, leading to increased demand for Linux system green-field installations and migrations. These databases can only operate on Linux, and given SUSE's natural fit with SAP, SUSE is the ideal partner.

Organizations poised for this migration are ideal targets in Servent's growth strategy. Companies using SAP systems are among the largest in the world. An incredible 76% of all transactions worldwide touch an SAP system, and 87% of Forbes Global 2000 companies are SAP customers.

This coalesces at a time when IT leaders and organizations suffering hardware-refresh

fatigue are looking to the cloud for leaner, faster, more agile data centers. Based on Servent's experience working across several sectors migrating to the cloud, the driving motivation behind these organizations is the same: "The primary reason for moving to the cloud is simply the innovation that the cloud brings," says McGuire.



Interestingly, to McGuire, not all clouds are created equal. After a series of PoCs carried out with a range of providers, McGuire became keenly aware that when it comes to running SAP applications in the cloud, Azure was the best choice.

"It's not that we have a bias to Azure because we're an Azure partner," McGuire says. "I've been in many competes with other cloud providers, and there's a lot of areas where, particularly in the SAP world, they just can't compete. When we see like-for-like in a bid, the solution that they put forward is cheaper because it's unsupported by SAP. They leave out backup, DI, premium discs for storage, all these things that when you add them in the bill, it goes up, and up and up. Having been through that process, we now know that that's a tactic where cheapest isn't always best."

Ready to capitalize on the impending migration to SAP S/4HANA and the cloud, Servent is prepared to assist top-tier organizations migrate their data centers into an Azure cloud, optimized for SAP performance with SUSE Linux technology.

### Why SUSE?

When it came to choosing a Linux partner, the decision was an easy one to make—SUSE was the right partner to mobilize Servent’s commercial strategy. Discussing the consideration of other Linux distributions from an SAP perspective, “It just doesn’t make sense,” says McGuire.

SAP’s close relationship with SUSE goes back over 20 years. SUSE’s SAP-tailored product, SLES for SAP Applications, is one of only 15 other technologies currently endorsed by SAP. It enables reduced risk from service outages, less time and effort for system maintenance, and faster services deployment on premises and in the cloud. But for all the value its product delivers, at least as much value, if not more, comes through SUSE’s partnerships.

“We don’t just pick a partner overnight; we choose a partner that makes sense for our business. We try to build a really deep relationship with that strategic partner to try and drive more business,” McGuire explains. “Being a SUSE partner, we really get that support in areas we’re not experts in. We can accelerate that experience, knowledge and know-how, and really take that to market.”

When Servent received the RFP from a high-profile retailer, they only had a few days to present their proposal. “The turnaround had to be quick – boots on the ground,

and that’s what we’re very good at,” says McGuire. “The SUSE team really supported us during this critical period. I let our team know, ‘We’ve clearly got the weight and support of SUSE here, so we need to lean on that to really upscale and narrow that knowledge gap.’ Thankfully, with the support of SUSE and Microsoft, we won the RFP a couple of weeks later.”

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**Andrew Norris**  
Azure Project Manager  
Servent

For the team, the future looks bright. As more companies realize the value of using Linux in the cloud, the demand for Servent’s unique services portfolio will grow. But with over 35 thousand customers just outside the flood gates, the question for McGuire and the team will become, ‘How do we manage multiple Linux customers in Azure?’ Enter SUSE Manager.

### What’s Next?

After realizing the benefits that SLES for SAP Applications would deliver for their premier retail customers, Servent’s Azure cloud architect wanted to know, “What else can we do and how can it be easier?” It was then the team learned about SUSE Manager.

SUSE Manager is designed to help enterprise DevOps and IT Operations teams reduce complexity and regain control of IT assets with a single tool to manage Linux systems across a variety of platforms, whether they be hardware architectures, hypervisors, containers, IoT or cloud distri-

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butions. What Servent finds most appealing about SUSE Manager is the tool’s ability to automate Linux server and IoT device provisioning, patching and configuration for faster, consistent and repeatable server deployment, helping to optimize operations and reduce costs. And with automated monitoring, tracking, auditing and reporting across development, test and production environments, SUSE Manager makes it easy for IT departments to ensure compliance with internal security policies and external regulations.

“SUSE Manager really is a stellar piece of technology, and I can see how it’s going to pay huge dividends in time savings and utilization across the whole piece,” says Andrew Norris, Azure project manager at Servent, referring to the impact SUSE Manager will have for their customers.

However, Servent has more plans for the automation tool. Norris explains: “SUSE Manager won’t just be for our customers. As we grow our managed estate with SUSE, SUSE-using customers will be able to move their management point into our own Azure platform, and we’ll manage everything centrally from there. SUSE Manager provides one central portal from where we can manage multiple customers—that’s really exciting.”

With its expertise in Azure Cloud, and the market potential for Linux migration, the sky is the limit for Servent. Backed by the support of world-leading technology partners like Microsoft and SUSE, the company is primed for rapid growth.

## Benefits

- First in Scotland to offer Linux on Azure services (including SAP/SUSE in Azure)
- Fully supported Linux distribution opens doors to an entirely new market opportunity poised for growth
- Greater agility
- Central management plane is key; SUSE Manager provides console and cascades deployments to multiple customers from there

## Find out how SUSE can help you become an innovation hero!

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