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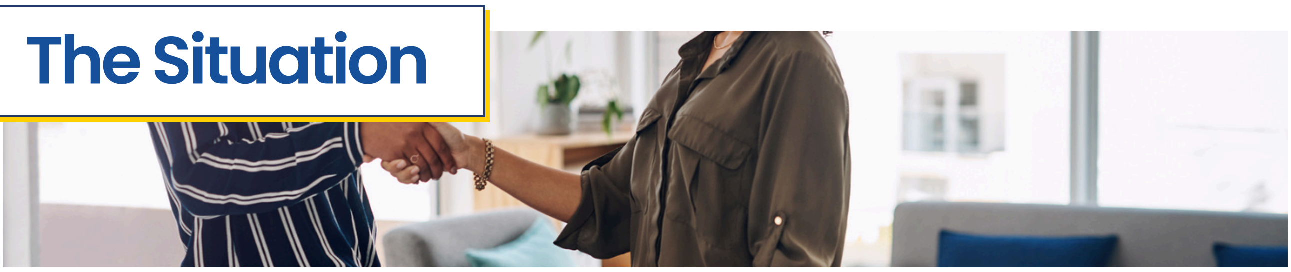
From Vendor Lock-in to Strategic Partnership:
# *A Cloud Hosting Transformation*

## Executive Summary →

A mid-market SME expanding into a **new market with rigorous compliance requirements** faced a **critical challenge**: their existing hosting provider was **increasing prices**, offering **no additional value**, and pressuring them into a **long-term contract**. Additionally, **unpredictable infrastructure costs** made budgeting nearly impossible, and their **compliance needs** for the new market were unmet. Within **10 months**, this company partnered with ***Storm Internet*** to migrate to a **virtual hosting environment**, gaining **compliance certainty**, **cost predictability**, and a **trusted advisor relationship** that transformed their infrastructure strategy.

## The Situation



The company was running a **dedicated bare metal server setup with their existing provider**. While the infrastructure was functional, a few problems were converging:

**Rising costs with flat service**
The provider was increasing prices without improving support or capabilities.

**Unpredictable monthly bills**
Load-dependent server costs made **budgeting impossible**; the finance team was frustrated by surprise invoices.

**Vendor pressure**
The client felt pressured into a **longer-term contract commitment**, with pricing positioned to get worse the longer they held off signing.

**Compliance gap**
The company was expanding into a new market with **stringent data protection and security regulations**. The client hadn't received the certification documentation or incident response assurances they needed from their existing provider in time to support the new market launch.

**In September, the company began evaluating alternatives.** Their primary request was a quote comparing equivalent dedicated bare metal to a virtual setup and they wanted to understand the **true cost implications** of each.

# The decision making process:

## Aligning Technical, Financial, and Compliance Priorities

The company's decision-making structure was complex.

**The primary lead was the Head of Operations** - a business-focused executive without deep technical expertise, but with clear priorities

### Compliance Assurance

They needed ironclad proof that the new hosting provider could meet regulatory requirements in the new market.

### Financial Stability

Her finance team needed a predictable Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR) figure, not surprise bills

### Trusted Partnership

They wanted a vendor who genuinely understood their business and had their best interests at heart.

### Objective Benchmarking

While impressed by Storm Internet, they wanted to compare options before committing.

Beyond the Head of Operations, the decision involved the Head of IT and the CEO- each with different technical and strategic concerns that required alignment.

# The Approach:

**Transparent Collaboration and Rigorous Vetting**

**September–October: Discovery and Stakeholder Alignment**
Storm Internet's Head of Customer Success took the lead. The initial conversation with the Head of Operations established trust by listening deeply- not selling.

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## The Approach:

The team documented three core needs: compliance, predictability, and responsive support.

In October, Storm Internet arranged a comprehensive meeting with all key stakeholders: the Head of Operations, Head of IT, CEO, and finance representatives, alongside Storm Internet's CTO.

Rather than presenting a single solution, the team discussed all available options- dedicated, hybrid, and fully virtual setups. The recommendation was to move to a virtual infrastructure, but only after the client understood the trade-offs and agreed it was the right choice.


**The CEO's feedback captured the turning point:**

> *It's so refreshing to meet a team who genuinely want to support our SME and get to know our business. I feel like I can trust you'll always have our best interest at heart. However, I do want to compare prices and do some benchmarking.*

*This quote encapsulates the shift: the CEO was no longer defensive about vendor lock-in. He was ready to commit, but wanted confidence in the financial decision.*

**November: Compliance Deep Dive**

The Head of Operations sent a formal compliance questionnaire. Three questions stood out as non-negotiable:

- Can you provide certifications for CE Plus and ISO27001?
- Do you have cyber incident response and forensic capability?
- Do you conduct a root cause analysis for all information security incidents that are reported?

These were not theoretical requirements, they reflected the regulatory environment of the new market and a genuine concern about whether Storm Internet could be trusted with sensitive data. Storm Internet provided comprehensive documentation addressing each question, demonstrating that compliance wasn't a checkbox exercise but a core operational practice.

**December: Technical Alignment and Migration Planning**

With compliance confidence established, focus shifted to technical execution. The Head of Customer Success coordinated multiple technical conversations between Storm Internet's engineering team and the client's IT lead.

These conversations covered infrastructure specifications, performance options, and critically, the onboarding and migration process. Clear timelines and low-risk cutover plans were mapped out. By the end of December, the client had all the information needed to sign.

**The Results: From Inquiry to Partnership in 10 Months**

January 2026: **Contract signed**

February–March 2026: **Migration setup call and onboarding execution**

April 2026: **Systems live and stable**

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## *The company achieved:*

**Compliance Certainty:** Regulatory requirements for the new market are met. Security incident response and forensic capabilities are in place

**Cost Predictability:** The finance team now works with a fixed MRR, eliminating budget surprises

**Infrastructure Flexibility:** The virtual setup provides room to scale without renegotiating contracts or facing penalty clauses

**Trusted Partnership:** The company has a vendor who takes the time to understand their business, involves them in decisions, and prioritizes their interests over a quick sale

**Strong Relationship Foundation:** The work done upfront-stakeholder alignment, compliance documentation, technical planning- created a durable partnership, not a transactional deal

Hi [redacted]

Firstly, I would like to say thank you to you and your team for a smooth setup and transition (plus the huuuge bar of chocolate). The couple of issues I've had have been minor and dealt with (via ticket) swiftly.

Secondly, we seem to be relying on Windows Defender Firewall on the servers - and while WDF is a capable product I feel that we're losing some level of service on Intrusion Detection (as an example) which would be handled by a more traditional setup - do you have any comments on this?

## Timeline:

### Sept 2025

**Company Sent Enquiry:**
Quote request for dedicated bare metal vs virtual setup

**Head of Customer Success Meeting:**
Key priorities: compliance safeguards, predictable MRR, strong support and vendor flexibility

### Oct 2025

**Comprehensive Options Review**
CEO, Head of IT, finance team + Storm Internet CTO Recommendation: move to virtual setup

**CEO Feedback**
"It's refreshing to work with someone who genuinely cares about our SME. However, I do want to compare prices and benchmark"

### Nov 2025

**Compliance Questionnaire**
CE Plus and ISO27001 certifications required. Cyber incident response, forensic capability, root cause analysis for all security incidents

### Dec 2025

**Technical Alignment**
Multiple conversations on specs and infrastructure options. Detailed onboarding and migration planning. Recommendations from both technical teams

### Jan 2026

**Contract Signed**
Partnership begins

### Feb 2026

**Migration Setup Call**
Infrastructure and technical kickoff

### Mar 2026

**Onboarding and Migration Complete**
Systems live and stable

### Apr 2026

**Happy Client**
Succesful partnership, strong relationship established