



Building a financial bridge with Asia

Bison Bank plans to have around 60% of its business based in the Asian market by 2022. To that end, it has a branch in Hong Kong and shareholding experience in the Asian market, namely in wealth management and investment banking.

The Bison Bank

Bison Bank provides wealth management, asset management and investment banking services. The bank established itself in the Portuguese market after the acquisition of Banif - Banco de Investimento (BBI) by Bison Capital Financial Holdings Limited (Bison Financial), a company owned by Bison Capital Holding Company Limited (Bison), based in Hong Kong and with a strong presence in China, Europe and Africa.



Bison holds assets that allow the bank to leverage a solid and distinct network of information, enabling its clients to benefit from a myriad of investment opportunities in several countries. Thus, the bank will act as a financial bridge between Asia, Europe and Portuguese-speaking countries.

António Henriques, Executive Director at Bison Bank, explains that the business areas are managed via two alternative channels - the head-office in Portugal and the branch in Hong Kong, which has just been opened.

The intercontinental connection, between the Asian market and the international market, that gives support to Asian clients who are interested in investing and expanding the range of their activities internationally, is the main distinguishing factor of Bison Bank, compared to other banking institutions in Portugal. This also includes international investors that are interested in investing in Asia.

The Executive Director states that Bison Bank plans to build a portfolio with 60% of its business based in Asia by 2022. Currently, the bank's dealings are almost exclusively based in Portugal and that's the reason why the main goal is *"to build a bridge with Asia, importantly, as we have a sole shareholder based in Hong Kong."*

António Henriques says *"it would be unthinkable to establish a bank in Portugal with the ambition of having 60% of its business based in Asia without a proper digital strategy"*, admitting that *"it would be an absolute mistake"*.



“*Claranet has always found innovative solutions to integrate the different types of environment, while supporting the run-the-bank and the updating process of some legacy solutions.*”

António Henriques
Executive Director
Bison Bank

Thus, after a careful market analysis, Bison Bank turned to a partner with proven expertise in responding to a company's needs and building the technological structure that supports its business. **Claranet** was the chosen partner.

“We are a wealth management and investment bank. Our ambition is not to be a retail bank with all the digital components associated therewith. Our advantage is that we are now beginning our digital path, allowing us to rapidly match the pace of other banks. We launched our first app at the end of the year, and we will soon have some surprises.”

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Executive Director
Bison Bank



Key services:

- Hybrid Cloud
- Desktop Management
- Service Desk
- Data Recovery

For more information about Claranet's services, and the benefits these deliver, go to: www.claranet.pt

Innovation made possible with Bison Bank's **Hybrid Cloud**

In order to be focused solely on its business, Bison Bank decided to outsource the IT management, monitoring and the evolution of its technological environment. With this measure, Bison Bank gained agility, scalability and mobility, and increased its security and resilience.

A Technology is changing the way financial services are known and used. Digital innovation is a great opportunity with implications for the existing technological infrastructure, by resorting to Cloud-based solutions, as well as agile platforms capable of streamlining digital transformation and business.

Digital Transformation implies changes at many levels and when Bison Bank started to design its infrastructure, whilst analysing the existing proposals on the market, it realised that the classic solutions were not sufficient to meet the needs or the agility that the business requires.

Therefore, they centered efforts on developing a **Hybrid Cloud**, because it provides the required level of agility and scalability for the rapid introduction of technological solutions. It also allows for the fast updating of the corresponding information and system recovery solutions, in case of unavailability or loss of the main systems.

"A bank's ability to recover from a disaster must be beyond doubt and is absolutely vital to support business functions," explains António Henriques, Bison Bank's Executive Director. The executive, responsible for the accounting and planning, operations and technology areas, speaks in this interview of the project developed with Claranet, the partner elected to help solve the bank's business and digital transformation technological challenges.

What triggered the need for Bison Bank to implement Hybrid Cloud and Disaster Recovery solutions?

The classic solutions do not ensure the needs or the flexibility that the business currently requires.

The Hybrid Cloud allows the level of agility and scalability required for the rapid insertion of technological solutions, as well as a quick update of the corresponding recovery solutions in case of unavailability or loss of the main systems. In addition, a bank's ability to recover from a disaster must be indisputable and is crucial to support business functions.

Which environments have you decided to store in the Cloud and which ones remain within the Bison Bank architecture?

We started out with **Disaster Recovery** environments for distributed systems and server-side digital channels. We are currently migrating the remaining infrastructure, beginning with environments that benefit from the flexibility and potential of Cloud-based functions.

This is the case of development environments and of the environments that frequently need scalability processes. Something that the Cloud does very quickly, efficiently and at substantially lower costs than in locally installed systems.

Which technologies are decisive for the project's operability, both for the Hybrid Cloud and for Disaster Recovery?

I would say that the most decisive are those that allow automation and that make it possible to monitor services in a hybrid and global manner.

Bison Bank, whilst migrating to a **Hybrid Cloud** and renewing its **Disaster Recovery** system, benefited from a wide range of new technologies, aimed at increasing the performance and security of its systems and communications, as well as improving its integrated management, via its automation and monitoring capacity.

In our project, in addition to the technology, the operational and management models were equally relevant, which gave Claranet

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António Henriques, Bison Bank's Executive Director

the opportunity to demonstrate its value in these fields.

What service does Claranet provide?

Claranet provides Bison Bank with infrastructure management services, having recently evolved into a Hybrid Cloud model that can be public or private, according to the type of IT solutions that support the business.

Claranet also provides complementary services, such as Desktop Management and Service Desk. Because Bison Bank is a small organization that wants to be focused on its business, Claranet's expertise in managing, monitoring and evolving technological environments was a decisive factor.

How did the implementation processes for these solutions go?

They were implemented in accordance with our expectations for a technology renewal project of this dimension, with the specificities of a global company operating in the financial sector.

What procedures and precautions did you take to implement this service?

The usual ones used in this type of processes, which are necessarily complex, but easily surmountable by applying the best good practices that we normally use.

In addition to planning all stages of the process, teamwork between Bison Bank and Claranet was also of fundamental importance.

I would highlight the activities that were planned in detail to ensure the mechanisms, which would allow the situation to be reversed in case of an unforeseeable event. That also includes continuous communication, a key feature to find quick answers to the challenges that are always encountered during complex projects like this one.

How did Claranet's technical and service team integrate within Bison Bank's current structure?

The best way to describe it is to say that everything succeeded in a model of true partnership, with excellent cooperation between the teams of Claranet and Bison Bank.

In this process, transparency in the exchange of information was essential during all stages. There is always room for improvement and over time, we hope to be fully in harmony with Claranet and enjoy the entire transformation experience, even in situations that are not digital-centered.

Is the service already available? What are its advantages?

Yes, the service is already available and allows for greater innovation. Once the processes were streamlined, we saved time in the different development and implementation stages, creating a kind of virtuous cycle, in which innovation leads to more innovation in these same processes.

We gained agility, scalability and mobility; and we increased security and resilience.

We also reduced our operating risks and costs. Despite the gains, we must strive to improve, for example, by defining the details of the operation and in the specific skills of Service Desk employees.

How do you analyse the result achieved with this service?

We have seen a significant increase in our business responsiveness, as well as a more efficient cost control.

Therefore, we naturally ended up seeing a very positive impact on the business as a whole. This is a marathon, not a 100-meter sprint. I believe that we have come a long way and are pursuing a goal of simplification.

Which business areas have benefited the most from this service?

The entire organization gained with this service, namely in terms of personal computing in mobility and the increased resilience and security of the bank's infrastructure. Specifically, the IT area gained greater availability for transformation projects, giving rise to a more TO BE approach than an AS IS one.

How innovative is the project developed by Claranet?

It is a very innovative project, mainly because it meant interweaving technologies with different maturity statuses.

Claranet has always found innovative solutions to integrate the different types of environment, while supporting the run-the-bank and the updating process of some legacy solutions.

Did you use this infrastructure upgrading process to change internal or external business processes?

Undoubtedly, the infrastructure upgrading and greater agility are fostering a more rapid transformation of the organization, and allowing for the optimization of business processes, by taking advantage of the new technologies that make them more efficient and controllable.

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