



# Cloud control

Offering simple data recovery through the cloud is giving Dropsuite an edge on its rivals, writes Paul Gilder

**T**HIEVES don't knock on your front door when looking to swipe your valuables, but it's usually pretty obvious that you've been robbed.

That's far from the case online, however, with increasingly sophisticated cybercriminals announcing their presence only when issuing a ransom notice for the return of data.

"There's two types of companies — companies that know they've been hacked and companies that don't," Dropsuite chief Charif El-Ansari says.

"The biggest hack is easy passwords, and that's a universal thing. The most common password in the world is 'password'."

Australia knows well the scale of the challenge to protect sensitive information, with confirmation earlier this year that collapsed satellite operator Newsat and the Bureau of Meteorology had been hacked.

It is a space where data recovery providers such as Dropsuite find themselves

increasingly in demand — not just as a backstop for hacking victims but for companies bound by corporate law to retain extensive archives of their digital transactions.

Mr El-Ansari, in Melbourne last week to drum up support for the company's imminent listing on the Australian stockmarket, is pitching his service at the nation's two million-odd small and medium-sized enterprises.

"There are 30,000 websites

hacked daily and 62 per cent of SMEs do not routinely back up their data," he says.

"Most SMEs are not IT-savvy. Our model caters to this problem by going through IT service providers so that it feels like it's part of their offering."

For a monthly subscription fee of as little as \$3, depending on the volume of data to be stored, Dropsuite offers one-click time-specific website, email and server recovery.

Customers effectively rent the software, so don't need to maintain it themselves, and can even use their mobile phone to restore their data.

Where Dropsuite differs from its rivals is that its software is entirely cloud-based — it uses Amazon Web Services' cloud storage facilities and their "bank-grade" 256-bit encryption to protect data in transit and while stored.

That point of difference seemed a natural progression when Mr El-Ansari first encountered the tech-babble hurdles confronting users of the software.

"I asked the technicians

how would a direct user back up their website, and they said 'OK, you have to enter the FTP (file transfer protocol).

"I used to work at Google, I didn't know what FTP was, so how would a doctor, a lawyer or a baker know what an FTP is?"

"I said 'we're not going to do that, we're going to focus on doing all this integration with the partner so it becomes one click'.

"The other side of the equation is you've got IT service providers who are really under pressure to reduce customer attrition and improve their revenue per user, so what we're offering is a coin with two sides."

Already, Dropsuite has the likes of US web hosting giant

GoDaddy — the world's biggest domain name registrar — and Optus parent Singtel on board as partners.

Mr El-Ansari was a senior executive for Google Asia when he came across Dropsuite.

The Singapore-based company was founded in 2012 by a friend who had been forced to shutter an earlier venture after losing his customer database to hackers.

Infuriated that his IT provider couldn't recover an up-to-date copy of the information, his response was to launch Dropmysite, the forerunner to Dropsuite. Initially an angel investor, Mr El-Ansari was persuaded in 2013 to join as chief executive to steer Dropsuite's next phase of growth.

Since then, 200 users have ballooned into more than



18 Oct 2016

Herald Sun, Melbourne

Author: Paul Gilder • Section: Business News • Article type : News Item  
Classification : Capital City Daily • Audience : 331,715 • Page: 26  
Printed Size: 618.00cm<sup>2</sup> • Market: VIC • Country: Australia • Words: 744  
Item ID: 673068390

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102,000, with revenue  
“growing exponentially”.

Mr El-Ansari expects the  
company to be cashflow  
positive within 18 months.

Dropsuite, which will hit  
the bourse late next month  
through a reverse takeover of  
mining shell Excalibur, is  
offering up to 80 million  
shares at 10c each and seeking  
to raise between \$5 million  
and \$8 million.

Yet given the public’s  
sensitivity around hacking, it  
prompts the question: how  
safe is the cloud? “I think the  
public cloud is more secure  
than any enterprise out there,”  
Mr El-Ansari says.

“Think of (cloud platforms)  
Amazon or Microsoft Azure;  
they’ve never been hacked.

“Amazon has an artificial  
intelligence machine with  
1500 engineers working on it.

“How many do you think  
are working full-time on  
security ... what we’re doing is  
leveraging that and adding  
another layer of security on  
top.”

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**Dropsuite chief executive Charif El-Ansari. Picture: NORM OORLOFF**