

Dell will let customers test its cloud services at new Round Rock center

By [Kirk Ladendorf](#)

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Dell Inc. will unveil a new customer solutions center today at its Round Rock headquarters, which is part of the computer company's global plan to find new ways to market its technology and services to midsize business customers.

The solutions center, which takes up about 10,000 square feet in Building 3 of the company's complex, will give potential Dell customers a place where they can "test drive" their existing business applications to see how they work with Dell's cloud computing software and hardware. Dell calls the process proof-of-concept testing.

The Round Rock center is the third of 22 such centers around the world that Dell is creating as part of a \$1 billion plan to boost its services offerings. That plan, first announced in April, calls for building as many as 10 data centers for Dell customers around the world over the next two years.

The first two centers, announced in June, are in Limerick, Ireland, and Shanghai.

"This center will enable our customers to better leverage their technology investments and focus more on driving value to their business," said Jan Uhrich, a vice president of Dell Services.

"This emphasizes Dell's evolution to a services and solutions company providing our customers with broad-based capabilities and expertise that will help them succeed," said Steve Schuckenbrock, president of Dell Services.

Dell expects some customers to spend at least a few days at the solutions center to do a thorough job of testing how their software works in it. They could also do a test where they link computers in different Dell centers around the world.

Some customers have been visiting the centers even while they were under construction.

"Their reaction has been very, very positive," Uhrich said.

The move to emphasize services is part of Dell's 3-year-old journey to transform the company into more of a one-stop shop that delivers complex information technology solutions for customers' business needs rather than just selling industry-standard hardware.

Dell's services business brought in \$7.7 billion of revenue last year, but there are signs it is growing rapidly this year.

The company said at an analyst meeting in June that it had signed \$900 million worth of new services contracts since the start of February with such customers as the Hyatt Hotels chain.

The Round Rock services center represents a small part of Dell's ambitious growth plans for the year.

The computer maker, which employed 103,000 people at the end of last year, projects that it will add up to another 7,000 jobs worldwide this year.

Part of that growth will occur in Asia, where two of the company's fastest growing markets, India and China, are located.

Dell also is building a campus in California's Silicon Valley, and it is expanding some of its recent business acquisitions, such as Minnesota-based Compellent Technologies, a maker of data storage networks that is now called Dell Compellent.

Company officials said they also expect to add jobs in the Austin area, where Dell employed about 15,000 people at the end of January, but they aren't saying how many local jobs will be added.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin