



Adecco Belgium delivers apps and desktops at the speed of business with Citrix

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Bjorn van Reet
ICT Director
Adecco Belgium

With over 700 employees, Adecco Belgium offers recruitment and selection, temporary employment and human resources (HR) services to the Belgian market. Adecco markets specialized HR services to different industry sectors through different brands and companies such as XPE Engineering & ICT, XPE Finance & Accounting and XPE Pharma & Science, Glotel, Modis, 3W and Lee Hecht Harrison. Every week 12,000 people are employed. Adecco has more than 120 Belgium offices, some on site at customer locations. The headquarters and shared service center for HR, finance and ICT are housed in Brussels. Adecco Belgium is part of the Adecco Group.

The challenge – double the speed of mission-critical applications

Adecco experienced increasingly slow performance of mission-critical client/server applications running on “fat” clients. In addition, system administration of the PCs at Adecco’s 120 offices had become time-consuming and inefficient. Each time there were problems, member of the IT staff needed to visit the remote location to solve them. “We searched for a way to increase the performance of applications by at least a factor of two,” said Bjorn van Reet, ICT Director at Adecco Belgium. “It was clear from the start that server and application virtualization needed to be part of the solution. We did a thorough study of available virtualization solutions and eventually selected Citrix virtualization solutions. An important selection criterion was the support for the forthcoming SIS smartcard in Belgium so that employees could authenticate and log on.” In addition, the solution needed to support the offshoring process so that employees in India, for example, could get access to the software development infrastructure at Adecco Belgium.

Key benefits

- Faster application performance (6X) boosts employee productivity and satisfaction
- Enables secure offshoring of software development
- Reduces time and effort for system administration
- Supports use of rich multimedia

Applications deployed

- MAX - HR application
- Magic software development environment
- Adplan - Adecco planning application

Implementing Citrix desktop virtualization

Centix, a Gold Citrix® Solution Advisor, supported Adecco in defining the architecture, conducting the proof of concept and implementation of the Citrix virtualization solutions and transferred all needed knowledge to Adecco in the process. First 16 physical HP ProLiant BL460c G6 servers were set up as hosts for Citrix® XenServer®. On these servers, Adecco installed 52 virtual workloads comprising Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003 with Citrix® XenApp™, Enterprise Edition.

The existing Dell PCs now are used to access published applications delivered from the virtualized Citrix XenApp workloads. Citrix® XenDesktop® was added to the architecture to support developers who need access to a virtualized desktop in Brussels. “We believe in the power of desktop virtualization and think that in the end we will migrate from published applications to full virtual desktops,” continued van Reet. “The ambition is to replace fat clients with thin clients organization wide and use Citrix XenDesktop as the underlying platform.”

Getting used to speed

All business applications including the in-house developed Human Resource application MAX are published from the XenApp farm to locked-down fat clients. The increase in productivity for over 700 employees is enormous. “We really gained marvelous results. We hoped to double the speed but we found the applications perform six times faster than before,” added van Reet. “And employees get used to speed in a short time! Previously, each time we visited an office, there were a few complaints because employees need to work with the applications day after day. Now the application is accepted and satisfied users treat us like a king.” Because productivity has top priority at Adecco, the organization is currently in the process to evaluate Citrix® Branch Repeater™ to increase application speed over the WAN to branch offices and raise user efficiency even more.

Efficient system administration and professional looks

With 150 offices and other subsidiaries with PCs, Adecco had found the distributed environment difficult to manage. Many traveling hours were needed to visit locations which only had a small problem that could be solved in 15 minutes. “With centralized management provided by Citrix XenApp, System administration now has become much easier and more efficient because there is no longer the need to travel to and from remote locations. The addition of shadowing features also streamlines system administration at the help desk. Thanks to the Citrix solution, we saved about one full-time IT position,” according to van Reet. “We had no experience at all with virtualization and now we administer the complete environment ourselves, with a support contract with our partner used only as fallback. Our system administrators got their knowledge during the project and today are Citrix certified. An important advantage of a Citrix infrastructure is that it made the work of the system administrators much more interesting. Now they can translate knowledge to projects and architecture in support of our business plans. As a result, IT activities have changed from reactive to proactive.”

Networking environment

- Citrix® XenServer®, Enterprise Edition
- Citrix® XenApp™, Enterprise Edition
- Citrix® XenDesktop®, Enterprise Edition
- Citrix Access Gateway, Enterprise Edition
- Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003
- Microsoft SQL Server
- 52 Dell PCs

Customers of Adecco also experience the same professionalism. Opening a new remote office no longer takes six weeks. Citrix virtualization makes it possible to set up the IT system for a new office within a day. Only a private connection is required for Adecco staff to start working. Everything is running in the Adecco datacenter and the employee's desktop does not need to be touched. Employees who need to access applications over an internet connection from home or using a 3G-adaptor in a laptop connect securely via Citrix Access Gateway™.

XenDesktop for offshoring and multimedia

Recently, the organization has developers working offshore who use the centralized development infrastructure at Adecco in Belgium. The organization installed a XenDesktop environment to support this. XenDesktop hosts the Magic Software that is used for developing and maintaining the front-end application that communicates with the AS400 and DB2 databases in the back office. "Adecco needs IT architects and IT specialists in-house, but also outsources the development of applications for cost reasons. Citrix XenDesktop gives external developers fast and secure access to internally managed virtual desktops on our network with our preferred applications." The IT system administrators at Adecco also work virtualized on the network.

Adecco Belgium sees the evolution of day-to-day business communication toward multimedia applications. In the future, the company will use XenDesktop for all employees. Van Reet: "Adecco has a decentralized organization but values internal communication. We already use traditional video conferencing between the main locations, and the system is always booked. We plan to bring video conferencing to a more personal level and for a much larger group of employees. Instead of using traditional newsletters for communication we want to migrate to 'weekly airtime' with streaming video. In addition, we will interview candidates over the network with webcams and bring them in contact with our customers this way. XenDesktop will help support our philosophy to 'bring people together'.

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About Citrix

Citrix Systems, Inc. (NASDAQ:CTXS) is a leading provider of virtual computing solutions that help companies deliver IT as an on-demand service. Founded in 1989, Citrix combines virtualization, networking, and cloud computing technologies into a full portfolio of products that enable virtual workstyles for users and virtual datacenters for IT. More than 230,000 organizations worldwide rely on Citrix to help them build simpler and more cost-effective IT environments. Citrix partners with over 10,000 companies in more than 100 countries. Annual revenue in 2010 was \$1.87 billion.

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