Flexibility during the crisis

Beiersdorf Shared Services cuts IT costs in half with Windows Virtual Desktop

When the COVID-19 crisis struck, Beiersdorf AG had already been offering an option for working from home for a long while. At the time of the lockdown, approximately 20,500 employees were working from home or on the road by means of a Virtual Private Network (VPN) connected to the company network. However, this meant the IT team at Beiersdorf Shared Services (BSS) was operating virtual clients and terminal servers in parallel – an additional expense that the use of Windows Virtual Desktop has canceled out. Now, the entire workforce always has access to a full-fledged workstation, including all apps and data – completely independent of location and device. The Beiersdorf Group has benefited from this flexibility, not at least when the crisis broke out: the switch to working from home was a mere formality.

The challenge: Duplicate structures, doubled effort, low performance

"Beiersdorf AG's portfolio includes Nivea, Eucerin, Labello, but also tesa," says Sebastian Meyer, Global Service Owner for Modern Client Technologies, about the Group's brand diversity. With his 385-person team at BSS, Meyer is a strategic partner to the parent company in the areas of IT and accounting, supporting all Beiersdorf AG locations worldwide. Although the group was well-positioned in terms of IT equipment and global IT processes were at a high level, there was still room for improvement. "Our previous remote access solution always involved extra work because we had to maintain two structures in parallel: virtual clients and terminal servers," explains Meyer. "That extra work applied to all areas – from hardware investment to the corresponding maintenance," he adds. In addition, the unreliable performance of the virtual client hardware limited productivity. "We would've needed to make massive investments in our local datacenter. However, we no longer wanted to carry out the maintenance work ourselves, nor did we want to force end users to change over to a new system. So we had to find another solution."

Microsoft's new Windows Virtual Desktop caught Meyer's attention. He saw a huge opportunity for Beiersdorf in the comprehensive service for desktop and app virtualization. Because the provisioning and scaling of all Windows desktops and apps take place in Microsoft Azure, the company could save time while providing maximum security and compliance. As a result, the BSS team participated in the preview phase and was paired with Microsoft partner Sepago Ltd in the Windows Virtual Desktop Lighthouse Program. "It was a fantastic fit," recalls Marcel Meurer, Division Manager of Professional IT Services at Sepago GmbH. "Beiersdorf and Microsoft are two very agile companies, so there was a good mix of pragmatic approaches and quick problem-solving." The participants had ambitious plans for what they wanted to accomplish during the three-month project: implement the entire Windows Virtual Desktop infrastructure – including standardized provisioning of the tool and its features, integration into the internal ordering process at BSS, as well as monitoring and autoscaling for a deeper insight into the infrastructure and better payload distribution. BSS had already created the most important Windows Virtual Desktop requirement as part of its cloud strategy: the connection to the Azure cloud platform.

The solution: High usability at half the cost – with the virtual workstation

As the coronavirus pandemic hit Europe with full force, Meyer, Meurer (Sepago), and their team were just in the final phase of implementing Windows Virtual Desktop. The sudden switch to working from home increased the use of the VPN infrastructure fivefold. In addition, company laptops that were not connected to Beiersdorf's internal network could no longer be supplied with the latest security patches. As a result, the step from the pilot phase to the go-live came faster than planned. "From one day to the next, we made the solution available to all employees worldwide," Meyer says. "Thanks to the high availability and scalability of Windows Virtual Desktop, we could do this with the touch of a button."

Windows Virtual Desktop is an Azure infrastructure for virtual desktops that is easy to manage, allows multiple sessions in Windows 10, and supports remote desktop services. The user has the impression that all programs and features are installed locally as on a conventional PC, but in fact they run via the cloud. This has the advantage that access to the usual workstation with all applications and data is possible by logging in from any terminal device with internet access. IT can deploy new virtual machines in minutes based on a standardized image for multi-session Windows 10.

Even onboarding new employees during the lockdown was no problem, as they had a full-fledged virtual workstation at their disposal from day one. "Access is independent of location and platform via our own terminals," Meyer says. "All you need is internet access and a browser, a mobile phone, or iPad, plus a username and password." WVD has also made work much more pleasant for the rest of the staff. Since all settings and files are saved, every employee always sees their desktop as they

"What Microsoft has developed here is simply phenomenal! Windows Virtual Desktop serves so many use cases and is very close to the end user. We were able to achieve maximum success with the project."

Sebastian Meyer, Global Service Owner for Modern Client Technologies, Beiersdorf Shared Services

"The collaboration was very agile and dynamic. During the project phase, we never visited Beiersdorf in Hamburg in person. We introduced Windows Virtual Desktop completely remotely."

Marcel Meurer, Division Manager Professional IT Services, Sepago GmbH

Customer
Beiersdorf Shared Services GmbH

Products and Services
Microsoft Azure, Windows Virtual Desktop

Industry
Consumer Goods

Organization Size
Corporate (10,000+ employees)

Region
Germany

Partner
Sepago GmbH

left it last time – even when switching to a different workstation or device.

And yet, with all its advantages, Windows Virtual Desktop still manages to help reduce IT costs; for example, by eliminating the need to purchase new equipment or programs for all external employees and for each IT training room. This lets Beiersdorf save approximately 50 percent of the costs for hardware, electricity, maintenance, and licenses. Azure and Windows Virtual Desktop have also massively reduced the amount of administration effort. Meyer wants to use his team's newly available capacity to switch to the new Windows Virtual Desktop version and to roll out the solution further within the company. As a pure Azure Resource Manager service, Windows Virtual Desktop can fully tap the potential of the Azure cloud platform.

Beiersdorf

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