CHALLENGE

Certis Europe wanted to reduce its employees' log-in times dramatically and gain more control over managing personal user profiles. It was important that staff did not have to enter their personal preferences afresh for each session. All this while still letting everyone work remotely to access data well and without any corruption, while still being secure, fast and threshold-free.

SOLUTION

VMware delivers a consistent and dynamic desktop and application experience with VMware User Environment Manager.

RESULTS

The log-in times of Certis Europe employees dropped dramatically, no matter where they are in Europe. Because the personal settings are present immediately for each new session, they no longer have to be entered again. Staff can easily fix any problems themselves. This has all raised employee satisfaction. The reliability of the data has also grown, and the declining number of service tickets has reduced pressure on the helpdesk. Products and advice reach the client more quickly, and upgrades and migrations run a lot more smoothly.

CERTIS

Certis Europe reduces log-in times dramatically with VMware UEM

Employee satisfaction rises and sales run more smoothly

Certis Europe, supplier of plant protection products, wanted to reduce its employees' long log-in times for its Citrix environment substantially and definitively. Having to constantly create new personal settings led to frustration in the workplace, both in the offices and in the field. The company attaches great importance to employee satisfaction and went looking for the best solution. Certis Europe found it in VMware User Environment Manager (UEM).

Plant protector Certis Europe has its headquarters in Maarssen in the Netherlands. From here, it supplies six European countries with chemical, non-chemical, patented and non-patented products. It doesn't have its own production facility, except for biological pesticides for predatory mites, for example. The company aims at having the most complete product portfolio possible. To serve its clients optimally, but in particular its own staff, it conscientiously opts for the best-of-breed in IT. Thus its server capacity has been fully virtualized with VMware since 2006. Guido Thonissen, ICT Manager of Certis Europe: "IT is highly critical for us. We have a great deal of knowledge and information which must be both well protected and easy to access. Take for instance the patenting of chemical ingredients and recording their research and reporting. This is an important part of our business. So information is absolutely key for us, which is why we save it very securely and consistently."

IT flexibility important

Many of Certis Europe's 210 employees work remotely. "They literally are in the field," continues Thonissen. "We don't sell to end-users. Our clients are companies who expect sound pre-advice from our specialists. Sixty or seventy per cent of our people are away from their base one or more days a week for their work. There are even colleagues who are only seen in the office a few times a year. In short, our people expect to be able to work from home. Certis Europe supports this fully. For us, the balance between work

and personal life is extremely important. This not only requires the company to be flexible, but our IT as well. Employees need to be able to access the data at all times. But there also needs to be a guarantee that they can work with it responsibly. This is one of the reasons we chose VMware ten years ago. Server virtualization makes migration easy. It produces optimum availability, which has an impact on the overall performance of our IT. The only issue still unresolved was the log-in time for our staff. It really took several minutes."

Major business impact

Time was not the only problem. The Certis Europe staff were frustrated because their personal settings were not carried through to the next session. The solution's architect, Johan van Zanten of Certis Europe explains: "We really wanted to do something about this. With the solution we had been using, signing in and out took far too long, and at the end of the session the entire user profile was discarded. Because of the huge volume of data there was also the risk that the data could become corrupted. However, the most important reason was the frustration in the workplace – in particular out in the field. Time and again they had to re-set everything. Our employees are our most important clients. At the same time, clients also had to be able to access all the information quickly and clearly. It might appear to be a minor technological issue, but it had a huge impact on our business. Every application has to launch quickly, otherwise it's not usable for our people. At the same time, their roaming

VMWARE IN PRACTICE
- VMware vSphere 6.0
- VMware UEM 8.7

ROLL-OUT ENVIRONMENT
- 8 Cisco B200-M3 UCS Minis
- EMC VNX5200
- Remote Desktop Services, with mandatory profile (in fact Citrix XenApp)

VIRTUALIZED APPLICATIONS INCLUDING
- Office Applications
- Adobe Professional

profiles kept growing, and the backup window became longer. All this made IT a lot more expensive. Yet another problem was that the log-in process didn't run in parallel with the background processes. That caused conflicts, so that the data became incomplete. Then our people couldn't sell anything, simply because they didn't have the right details. And don't forget that our IT for all of Europe is running here in the datacentre."

Set it, forget it

To sort out the log-in problem once and for all, Certis Europe decided to use VMware User Environment Manager (UEM). Van Zanten: "The only thing you need to know about this solution is where the settings are recorded in the user profile. That's easy to explain to any administrator: the Windows register and the user profile. This way, you can get to work so surgically with VMware UEM that extremely specific settings can be created. This ensures that our user profiles are compact. And we also only save the user-specific settings with VMware UEM. The rest are implemented with a mandatory profile, which is very static. All simply a question of ticking boxes. No temporary internet files are left behind. Once an employee logs out, the memory cache is emptied. When this colleague then logs in again, he is given a new profile, which only includes his changes. This way of working benefits the security and continuity of our business. An additional advantage is that it excludes viruses, because the files in which they could hide are never re-used. Java files are only available in the Citrix session, and after that they're gone. It runs on ten servers, which are automatically load-balanced. We know what we are including, so the risks of malware, for example, are completely minimised. VMware UEM also takes all the required settings and compresses them in a zip file. When logging-in, the data is returned to the user profile. The settings are saved in the application. With the self-help option, employees can resolve a whole range of issues themselves. So they no longer need the helpdesk. This self-support is part of the package, as is an automatic backup of all user profiles. It really is 'set it and forget it'."

Everyone benefits

Certis Europe is extremely satisfied with both the implementation and the end result. Thonissen concludes: "Automation means careful consideration of a situation which needs a solution. In this case the answer was VMware UEM. The implementation was done in phases, so that our employees barely noticed anything. Except that their log-in times were many magnitudes shorter. They went from 2.37 minutes to 17 seconds. Our upgrades and migrations also run much more smoothly now. Our primary objective was to enhance employee satisfaction, and we've achieved that with this solution. It's also the IT department's duty to ensure that colleagues are happy. After all, a happy employee is a better salesperson. And now that the number of service tickets has reduced dramatically, we also have more time for this again. The sales department also reaps the benefits. Orders are dispatched faster, and our specialists can give clients advice more quickly. In short, everyone in Certis Europe benefits from VMware UEM."

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