



A secure and stable IT infrastructure for external customers



A secure digital workplace concept that is independent of devices and operating systems and that makes staff more productive



Easier recruiting of young talents

“New Work” with SoCura: Digital Workplaces Based on the Zero Trust Security Model – Secure Mobile Working in Welfare, Churches and Healthcare

Most companies these days cannot imagine life without mobile work. Not so those industries whose daily bread is to handle highly sensitive personal data that demands special protection, however. That is why IT service provider SoCura supplies welfare organizations, church groups and healthcare players with modern IT solutions. As part of its IT modernization drive, SoCura harmonized the virtualization platforms for its two customer clouds to uphold the high security standards its customers demanded. And to master the topic of mobile digital workplaces, it opted for VMware. VMware’s Zero Trust security model empowers the company to guarantee its customers a secure mobile working experience. VMware Workspace ONE delivers secure access to corporate data – from any device (mobile, desktop, IoT etc.) to any application (Mobile, SaaS, Native, Virtual etc.) and from any location (inside and outside the corporate network). This flexibility embodies the spirit of “new work”, which is all about boosting productivity and staying attractive as an employer for young talents.

SoCura

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INDUSTRY

Telco & service provider welfare, church and healthcare organizations

HEADQUARTERS

Cologne, Germany

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

VMware vSphere
VMware Workspace ONE

IT Services for Welfare, Church and Healthcare

SoCura, a subsidiary of the Malteser relief agency, is a provider of accounting, IT and personnel services for organizations in the welfare, church and healthcare space. Its 350 staff operate from three offices in Germany and support an array of Caritas associations and dioceses alongside Malteser, the company's main customer. SoCura also advises hospitals and hospital associations on IT and process optimization. Its core business revolves around two cloud products: The Malteser Private Cloud (MPC) and the Wohlfahrt.Cloud (“welfare cloud”, or WFC). Operated exclusively for the Malteser relief agency, the MPC makes all applications and services available to the association's parent company. The WFC delivers the same applications and services to other customers in the church and welfare space. SoCura also runs a device service and offers mobile communication support to handle the provisioning and management of all devices. It operates more than 300 applications on behalf of its customers, including large-scale systems such as SAP, the ORBIS hospital information system, the Vivendi documentation system for social welfare and care services, plus home emergency call systems.

Incompatible Software Components and Inflexible Workplaces

Like other sectors, welfare, churches and healthcare too are being swept by a wave of digitalization, and SoCura is keen to position itself as a front-runner and strategic partner in this field. The company implemented its WFC welfare cloud in 2016 after expanding its customer portfolio to include external customers outside the Malteser relief agency. Unlike the Malteser Private Cloud (MPC), which had always been based on VMware vSphere, SoCura initially used a different hypervisor for its new cloud. “But over time, we discovered that administration was more complex and that we had functional restrictions,” explains Mike Melcher, IT Service Manager at SoCura. “From an operational point of view, too, it makes sense to concentrate on just one system, as the IT specialists can then drill down more deeply into the details. Trying to do that across software components from different vendors is extremely difficult – and usually more expensive.” The challenge was therefore to align the virtualization platforms during live operation, preferably without disrupting the company's day-to-day business and while keeping a close eye on the needs of the customers.

The service provider also wanted to avoid falling behind in the age of “new work”. To stay competitive in a world with heterogeneity of devices and operating systems, as well as to accommodate bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policies, it was important to build on a modern, mobile workplace concept. Another goal was to provide mobile IT support that would make life easier for the company's staff. In the context of social service activities, virtually seamless documentation is needed for sensitive personal data, but has so far been handled mostly on paper. Before the mobile IT services were introduced, employees had to go back to the office at the end of a hard day's work to write up all their documentation. SoCura customers with nationwide activities of their own likewise needed secure access to essential data from wherever they happened to be. Here, one

of the biggest obstacles was guaranteeing compliance with data security stipulations.

Converging Virtualization Platforms, Mobile Work and BYOD

In 2018, SoCura decided to modernize its IT infrastructure and harmonize the virtualization platforms for the two clouds. “We decided to deploy VMware vSphere as the virtualization platform in both ‘worlds’ to simplify management,” Melcher notes. “We have been working with VMware for many years and our experience has been very positive.” When its customer Caritas asked about a mobile workplace concept, it was therefore only logical for Melcher, who oversees a 90-strong team at SoCura, to

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MIKE MELCHER
IT SERVICE MANAGER, SOCURA

once again turn to VMware. VMware Workspace ONE, the integrated platform for digital workplaces, enables SoCura to give its customers modern, mobile workplace solutions for their employees and volunteer staff, and also to support BYOD concepts. The project for Caritas was launched in 2018, with roll-out commencing in 2019. In the long term, the objective is to reach a four-digit number of devices managed on Workspace ONE across the company's various customers.

Secure and Reliable IT Infrastructure Paired with “New Work”

The streamlined management afforded by a modernized structure and harmonization of the two clouds is today saving SoCura time and money. External customers are likewise reaping benefits, as the VMware products deployed comply with strict ISO 27001-certified security requirements. SoCura can thus give its external customers the guarantee of a secure and, above all, stable IT infrastructure. That is important, because the company manages a host of critical applications. “Especially in healthcare, critical systems need not only high availability, but also high performance and flexibility,” stresses Andreas Zander, Head of IT Infrastructure at SoCura. “Our experience to date confirms that VMware can deliver on that promise.” One striking example is the Malteser service center, which fields all emergency calls from Malteser's more than 130,000 customers. This highly critical application cannot under any circumstances be allowed to fail,



not even for a few seconds, as that could literally be a matter of life or death.

The integrated platform for digital workplaces makes it significantly easier to onboard new staff and volunteers. More importantly, it eases the burden on employees during their day-to-day work, as well as saving lots of time now that corporate data can be accessed around the clock. Access technologies such as single sign-on (SSO) makes Workspace ONE easy to use and keeps private and professional usage clearly separate. That boosts the productivity of employees, who have high expectations of “new work” and IT facilities. In the past, customers wanted standard devices in a protected environment that was managed by SoCura. “But today we face a different reality,” Melcher comments. “Users now want to work with their own devices, because they know how they function. That was a major factor in the decision to adjust our strategic orientation and build on VMware Workspace ONE. One key task is now to keep developing our IT services to the point where they can be used as independently as possible of the type of device, but without compromising the required security standards. Ultimately, we will combine the management and security of both our BYOD and fully managed devices.”

One important criterion influencing the decision to use VMware technology is the fact that, essentially, the device and the operating system no longer make a difference. The service is provided via a secure, protected platform to ensure that all commercially available devices – such as laptops, thin clients, IoT devices, tablets and smartphones – can use it. Since the user interface on Workspace ONE has not changed, employees also benefit from seamless, simple and intuitive use. At the same time, Workspace ONE accommodates the Zero Trust security model, which ensures full compliance with customers’ strict security requirements. Thanks to VMware, SoCura is now in a position to give its customers services such as mobile services (using tablets and smartphones etc.) that were not feasible in the past due to security demands in the healthcare and welfare sector.

Looking Ahead

Armed with the solutions from VMware, SoCura and its customers are well equipped to rise to the challenge of “new work”. “Right now, we are mapping out our strategic orientation for the years ahead,” says Thomas Berding-Pniok, CEO at SoCura. “We’ve already got ideas about how to further develop our clouds and are currently fleshing out the detailed concept. We also want to look at the topic of virtual desktop infrastructures (VDIs) and rethink them in light of the new possibilities that are now available. Backed by SoCura, welfare, church and healthcare organizations are very well placed to benefit from digitalization. They are equipped with innovative, secure IT services they can trust.”



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