A chemicals company specialising in rock salt extraction and chlorine production, Kem One is Europe’s second-largest PVC manufacturer. With six production sites in France and Spain, it employs 1,300 people and generates turnover of more than €900m.

Kem One migrates its IT infrastructure to the public cloud
A dual modernisation and FinOps project

Kem One, the second-largest PVC manufacturer in Europe, wanted to renew its ageing IT infrastructure, divided between two data centres in the Lyon region. Jean-Yves Pottier, head of IT infrastructure, led the project to modernise the chemicals company’s information system with the help of VMware and TeamWork.

“Our IT infrastructure comprised two ageing data centres in the Lyon region, 5km apart and made up of Unix and HP systems. The cost of renewing and maintaining this on-premises equipment was becoming prohibitive. Furthermore, the infrastructure team, made up of three people including myself, was clearly insufficient to tackle all the challenges. Our technological environments therefore urgently needed modernising!” recalls Jean-Yves Pottier.

After in-depth consideration, the option of renewing the existing IT equipment at the Kem One sites was permanently rejected — in favour of the public cloud. In 2018, the company organised a call for tenders to find a solution to meet its needs. This had to include both hosting in a public cloud — without committing the company to laborious rewriting of its applications — and incorporate all the necessary virtualisation technologies, while obtaining support from a high-quality service provider to carry out the migration.

Kem One migrates 280 virtual machines migrated to the AWS public cloud. Less than 15 minutes’ downtime for the 900 SAP users. 26% savings on infrastructure costs. Improved agility and budget monitoring.

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INDUSTRY
Manufacturing

LOCATION
Lyon, France

ABOUT THE PARTNER
A major player in consulting, technological integration and innovation, TeamWork was founded by its current CEO in Geneva in 1999. Its 900 employees work in four main business lines: Management Consulting, SAP Business Solutions, Data Analytics and Technology Platforms.

VMWARE FOOTPRINT
VMware Cloud on AWS®
VMware HCX®
VMware vSphere®
Kem One migrates its IT infrastructure to the public cloud

Real-time migration of 280 virtual machines
In early 2019, the chemicals company eventually chose the AWS public cloud and VMware HCX, with support for project teams from the services company TeamWork. The decision to entrust the project to these providers was based on several legal, technical and financial factors. Firstly, the consideration of legal requirements imposed by General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the company’s management. Secondly, the possibility of performing the migration of the 280 existing virtual machines in real time facilitated by VMware vSphere, an environment already in place, and VMware HCX, which simplifies the migration of applications to the cloud. Finally, in terms of budget, a FinOps approach was adopted in order to optimise the AWS hosting costs.

A simple, fast and economical migration, in “lift and shift” mode
“Our applications weren’t originally designed for cloud-native migration. However, our objective was to migrate to the cloud as quickly as possible with minimum downtime, particularly to avoid impacting the 900 users of our ERP,” adds Jean-Yves Pottier. As Kem One already had a VMware vSphere virtual infrastructure in place, it opted for a simple, fast and economical migration, in “lift and shift” mode.

VMware’s HCX solution meant the migration only took a few months, with less than 15 minutes of downtime for the 900 SAP users. The impact on the company’s applications was minimal, as it was able to rebuild its ESX clusters very easily on AWS and without changing the IP addressing, which generally increases risk (refactoring) and extends migration times. Another key point: “The performance of a migration to the cloud partly depends on the bandwidth available to the hosting provider and this point shouldn’t be underestimated,” emphasises Jean-Yves Pottier, who had to manage volumes of up to 2TB on some mail servers.

A 26% saving on infrastructure costs
The move to the AWS public cloud also enabled Kem One to replace the old database system installed in its data centres with the SAP HANA In-Memory cloud database, before then migrating its ERP (SAP SP8), natively in AWS EC2, in a second phase.

“Migration of our information system to the AWS public cloud was completed in a few months, thanks to VMware solutions and support from TeamWork. At the end of the day, we are saving 26% on our infrastructure costs and have improved our agility – all without a moment’s impact on our 900 users.”

JEAN-YVES POTTIER
HEAD OF IT INFRASTRUCTURE, KEM ONE

Another non-negligible advantage for the chemicals company was the 26% saving achieved compared with its old “on premises” infrastructure costs. “The FinOps mechanisms put in place enable us to precisely monitor changes in our cloud infrastructure costs. Since AWS offers a diverse range of solutions and it is very easy to add resources, we need to be aware of the financial impact,” explains Jean-Yves Pottier.

And what about the future?
“Both the VMware experts (account team, presales, sales specialist) and the TeamWork project team have demonstrated their expertise and readiness to tackle any challenge. I am very satisfied with our migration and not simply the technical aspects. The cloud provides us with new agility to rapidly add additional infrastructure components according to our development teams’ needs and the budget to be allocated, which is now very easy to calculate,” concludes Jean-Yves Pottier.