



PEKAO FINANCIAL SERVICES: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ACCELERATES SERVICE DELIVERY

Pekao Financial Services

CUSTOMER

PEKAO FINANCIAL SERVICES SP. Z O.O.

WEB SITE

WWW.PEKAO-FS.COM.PL/EN/

INDUSTRY

FINANCIAL SERVICES

LOCATION

WARSAW, POLAND

KEY CHALLENGES

- Building IT environment for critical financial applications and systems
- Ensuring high level security in a virtual environment
- Achieving maximum economic efficiency and employees productivity

SOLUTION

Virtualization of servers, security and workstations has enabled Pekao Financial Services to build a highly available, efficient and scalable IT environment for all its employees and critical applications they use.

IMPACT

- Increased availability, security and reliability of the IT infrastructure
- Shortened the time needed to launch new systems and development environments
- Increased business efficiency which accelerates the delivery of new products and services

The Polish financial sector is considered to be both exceptionally innovative and secure. This is largely due to the introduction of regulations and investments in technologies. Pekao Financial Services is a perfect example. The company invested in virtualization as soon as in 2004, effectively starting its digital transformation. The result? The implementation of VMware technology has made it much faster and safer to introduce new financial services.

Pekao Financial Services is a financial branch of one of the oldest Polish banks: Pekao SA and Pioneer International Group. Established in 1992, the company was the first transfer agents on the nascent Polish capital market. Today, Pekao Financial Services is servicing assets with a total value of over €20 billion. Pekao clients are one of the largest Polish pension and investment funds, along with global companies such as Goldman Sachs Asset Management. As one of the pioneers of digital transformation in Poland, the company constantly invests in new technologies in order to maintain the quality of services and ensure their full security.

Challenge

From the very beginning, Pekao Financial Services focused on the uniqueness of its services and technologies. In the present day, however, the rush towards innovation means that financial institutions must compete not so much with uniqueness as with the speed of operations, the level of security and the reliability of the services provided. This last feature is so important that according to the ITIC consulting company, the hour of downtime caused by outages can cost a company up to \$260,000.

“Today, a financial institution must be available 24/7 to its customers, especially when it manages millions of euro. From our perspective, ensuring business continuity is a task that every company in the financial industry should perform at the highest level if it does not want to lose the trust of its clients. In this situation, the digital transformation of business is not only an opportunity but also a serious challenge, because it does not forgive mistakes made by the careless user,” says Łukasz Zaśko, System Administrator in the Information Technology Department of Pekao Financial Services.

In the face of the growing number of digital threats, a financial institution must be equipped with a shield that protects it not only against cybercriminals but also against physical damage to the IT infrastructure or internal data leakage. In the financial sector, however, ensuring security is only one part of the equation. The second is the speed of making decisions and introducing new services.

“What tools such as VMware vSphere 6.7 and Horizon 7.5 have given us above all is time. This is because it allows Pekao employees to focus on business solutions instead of problem resolution.”

ŁUKASZ ZAŚKO
SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR IN THE INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT
PEKAO FINANCIAL SERVICES

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- VMware vSphere 6.7
- VMware Horizon 7.5

Action

When an opportunity presented itself to meet these challenges with system virtualization in 2004, Pekao Financial Services did not hesitate. As the first institution on the Polish financial market, it invested in VMware technologies.

“Originally, we decided on server virtualization based on the VMware ESX 2.5 platform. Our market environment and available technologies, however, were developing so fast that we invested in newer versions and new tools to virtualize servers and desktops, and to ensure the security of our systems. Our common journey has lasted so long that it would be difficult for me to imagine Pekao Financial Services without these solutions. Between 2004 and 2018, most of our critical information infrastructure was updated with VMware technologies. Currently, the level of virtualization is almost 70 percent,” explains Łukasz Zaśko.

With new challenges facing digital business, the company has implemented a number of updates to its existing VMware technologies. The latest versions of products including of VMware vSphere 6.7 and VMware Horizon 7.5 have enabled many additions and improvements that increase the productivity of not only the IT department but also the entire company.

“VMware vSphere 6.7 significantly speeds up the operation of the entire IT environment by isolating applications and operating systems from their physical, hardware layer. The administration is also facilitated by automating of certain processes, freeing the IT department to support the company in other areas. We are achieving this for e.g. by simplifying backup and restore processes,” – comments Łukasz Zaśko

The main development goals are further, achieved primarily through the desktop virtualization based on VMware Horizon.

“This solution makes it even simpler to manage systems and increase work efficiency, and offers huge possibilities where the security of sensitive data is concerned. Virtual desktops based on VMware Horizon are a real alternative to physical workstations because they significantly limit the possibility of data leaks, including those caused by mistakes of unaware employees,” – adds Łukasz Zaśko .

Currently, about 60% of desktops have been virtualized using the VMware Horizon solution. It provides access to corporate applications and devices of any type, including physical desktops and laptops, virtual desktops and applications, and employee-owned PCs. Such virtual workstations not only enhance management but also improve the productivity and user experience with additional security features.

“Centralized management of virtual desktops with VMware Horizon gives you control over what is happening in the environment of a given employee. If someone unknowingly opens a dangerous e-mail or file, within a few seconds you can cut off the workstation from the network by blocking unwanted traffic and at the same time you can launch a new station that will ensure the continuity of the user’s work . This virtually eliminates data leaks, and the employees’ performance increases, because in case of any problem their projects can be immediately restored. Under normal circumstances, employees waste time waiting for the repair and reboot of their IT systems. With VMware Horizon, the IT department is able to quickly restore the virtual work environment, including desktops and laptops, and employee-owned PCs, and thus the business continuity is never at risk,” adds Łukasz Zaśko.

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Results and Impact

VMware-based virtualization at Pekao Financial Services is now a standard technology without which critical company services and systems could hardly operate. It made it possible to reduce unplanned downtime of applications and operating systems, accelerate response to existing problems, and decrease the potential server downtime to almost zero, which is guaranteed by a 99.995% SLA.

“What tools such as VMware vSphere 6.7 and Horizon 7.5 have given us above all is time. This is because it allows Pekao employees to focus on business solutions instead of problem resolution. This is because the VMware tools have been upgraded and refined over time making them ideal for highly regulated industries such as financial services,” - comments Łukasz Zaśko.

Proper selection of technologies also increases the efficiency of processes, which accelerates the delivery of new products and services.

“The implementation of vSphere 6.7 and Horizon 7.5 has shortened the time needed to launch new systems and development environments, which allows users to test new business systems and applications more efficiently. In effect, vSphere 6.7 server virtualization speeds up processes not only in the IT department but also in the entire company, because our employees are able to provide finished products to end customers much faster. Desktop virtualization allows them to do it from anywhere. Also, with VMware ThinApp, we do not waste time adjusting applications to a given operating system. We can immediately check whether the applications we create will run on other systems without any conflicts,” explains Łukasz Zaśko.

Looking Ahead

Pekao Financial Services is planning to invest in technologies that will significantly increase the storage space in the near future. This is a key task, considering the analyses that predict that the amount of data will double every two years until 2026. However, the most important area of company's development is full automation of system activities, both in the context of creating new environments and restoring processes after a failure.

“Imagine that our system works like a robot that can be taught desired behaviors. Using VMware Horizon, the configuration modeled once can be automatically duplicated in the future when the need arises – all without human intervention, which means you can focus on what is most important for business: earning money, not solving problems,” notes Łukasz Zaśko. One of the technologies currently considered by Pekao Financial Services is also VMware vSAN, which accesses available storage in physical servers and creates a shared storage pool that supports VMware virtual machines.

