FONDAZIONE DIAMANTE TRANSFORMS ITS IT INFRASTRUCTURE WITH VMWARE

FD FONDAZIONE DIAMANTE

SECTOR
NON-PROFIT

LOCATION
ITALIAN-SPEAKING SWITZERLAND

THE CHALLENGES
• Increase the number of available work stations.
• Make the process of logging data on operational activities faster and more efficient at the central and local offices.
• Streamline information gathering and software distribution.

THE SOLUTION
Fondazione Diamante has introduced virtualisation to its IT systems at client and server level with a new desktop virtualisation solution.

THE BENEFITS
• 60% more work stations available for staff use.
• Streamlined, simplified data entry.
• Centralised information and user profiling.
• Simplified software deployment and access to information.

A social enterprise spread over its local area; the need to simplify and streamline the day-to-day administration load to 200 employees across 25 locations in Canton Ticino; server and desktop virtualisation to obtain clear, consistent data and a simpler, faster, more personalised working environment. Fondazione Diamante launches a major transformation project with VMware technology.

Fondazione Diamante was established in 1978 with a mission to help adults with disabilities to regain their independence through work. Over the years, the Foundation has developed dedicated departments to provide different kinds of social and educational support, some more complex and specific than others.

The Foundation has always provided activities for people with disabilities that can lead to real employment openings and help them into the world of work. It runs 13 workshops, 5 shops, 4 sheltered residential units (with a foyer and apartments), 4 housing support services and 5 employment placement services. The supported activities span all sectors of economy, from primary to tertiary: horticulture, poultry farming, vine growing, ceramics, woodwork, restoration, weaving, tailoring, assembling, cabling, graphic design and layout, printing, bookkeeping, catering and sales.

The challenges
Fondazione Diamante supports over 600 users with disabilities and employs 200 social workers in Canton Ticino, from Chiasso to Biasca and Bellinzona to Locarno. Covering a wide area with several centres has always posed an operational challenge for the Foundation. As it branched out, offering new services in new locations, staff involved in planning and recording everyday activities faced a gradually increasing workload. "Each of the Foundation's 25 bases had a PC that staff used to log and record the various activities", recalls Matteo Fraschina, the responsible manager. "The reporting involved filling in electronic forms, which were sent to central HQ on portable storage devices for input to the central management systems". This process needed streamlining, to provide staff at HQ in Manno and at the local offices with shared, integrated-access tools to optimise data entry.

The solution
In 2015, the Foundation met 4IT Solutions, a consulting firm specialising in advanced IT infrastructure implementations, sparking a process of change that would prove pivotal. The Foundation decided both to rationalise and modernise its central information systems, and to standardise and simplify its peripheral infrastructure. The specialists at 4IT Solutions recommended virtualising the servers and the desktop component, which was used in the local operating base in Canton Ticino. Once the public Centro Sistemi Informativi approved the

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MATTEO FRASCHINA
OPERATIONS MANAGER
FONDAZIONE DIAMANTE

VMWARE TECHNOLOGY
• VMware Horizon
• VMware Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI)
• VMware vCenter Server
• VMware vSphere

PARTNER

4itSolutions

4IT Solutions is a firm specialising in consulting and advanced IT infrastructure implementation. It is a VMware Enterprise Solution provider specialising in desktop virtualisation – the only partner certified and recognised by VMware in Ticino for that service – and it also holds VMware Academic Specialization accreditation. 4ITSolutions has a portfolio of high-quality clients who have endorsed it as their sole trusted supplier in Ticino for innovative IT solutions.

4ITSolutions.com

plan, confirming that it met the necessary quality criteria, the most significant tranche of work was completed in just over six months, with the commissioning of four high-reliability central hosts. At the local offices, the existing PCs were virtualised with Horizon, while other thin clients were configured to access the central servers through profiled user accounts. This approach increased the number of available work stations without the need to buy dedicated machines. "A thin-client work station costs about 50% less than a PC: by virtualising the desktops, we have increased the number of available work stations by over 60%", says Fraschina.

The benefits

Virtualising the desktops has provided the Foundation's employees with more work stations: 12 at central HQ and over 60 in the local offices. "In the past, operators had to wait their turn to record data on the PCs. We now have more work stations available, and the queues have disappeared", Fraschina explains. The most obvious benefit is that data input is now a more efficient, integrated process. "Users access the central information system directly from the clients", Fraschina continues. "This has enabled all our staff to access all the formal requirements of our quality management system more easily". As a matter of course, employees access their own virtual workspace through a profiled user account, and they can work from any office even when their 'own' PC is not available.

Software updates used to be distributed by IT staff, who had to visit the Foundation's 25 offices individually, but now this task is handled centrally and automatically. Backup, saving and archiving data have now also been automated thanks to the VMware virtualisation technology. And there have also been security benefits as well, as the virtualised system affords a level of protection when transmitting data from the centre to the local offices that would previously have been unimaginable.

In the pipeline

The transformation of Fondazione Diamante's IT infrastructure is an ongoing project. Analysis work is under way to develop new applications for the central management systems and their associated data repositories, and for the proposed adoption of an IP telephony system, which is currently under evaluation.

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