



Randstad Belgium

Citrix Application Delivery
for Financial Services

“ Although we drastically expanded in number of employees and grew to a one-billion-euro company, the IT staff has not increased. ”

Marc Van Harneveldt
IT Director,
Randstad Belgium

Key benefits

- Provides flexibility for employees to work from anywhere
- Improves security by avoiding local data storage
- Enables company expansion without adding IT staff
- Saves on maintenance and support

Randstad Belgium supports growth with greater business agility

Randstad Uitzendbureau is a Dutch temporary employment agency that set up business in Belgium in 1965 under the name Interlabor Interim. The Randstad brand name was introduced in Belgium in 1970, and Interlabor and Randstad merged in 1999 to form Randstad Belgium. In addition to temporary employment, Randstad Belgium offers services in the area of human resources and provides recruitment and selection, career advice, training and numerous other services. Randstad Belgium has almost 130 outlets (subsidiaries) with 1.700 employees and is headquartered in Brussels.

The challenge: supporting company growth by lowering IT costs

Until 2006, Randstad Belgium had central servers running services such as databases, as well as local file and print servers in its 130 outlets and in small offices located on site at large customers. All employees worked with PCs and laptops. The world of temporary employment agencies is very dynamic. This distributed computing environment placed a heavy load on the IT staff, which often needed to visit the local outlets to respond to help desk calls, fix broken PCs and solve other issues such as virus scanning.

To decrease IT administrative workload and problems for employees, Randstad Belgium decided to develop a complete new architecture and set up a new infrastructure. The Dutch and German divisions of Randstad had already rolled out a new infrastructure based on Citrix XenApp™ and had developed a best practices scenario. Randstad Belgium, also responsible for IT in Luxembourg, did a cost-benefit analysis and compared the existing infrastructure with a new XenApp, Enterprise Edition environment. The conclusion was that an architecture that included Citrix XenApp lowered total cost of ownership. Therefore, Randstad Belgium decided to follow the best practices of its sister divisions.

Implementing an Application Delivery Infrastructure from Citrix

The IT staff at Randstad Belgium went to **Porthus**, a Gold Citrix Solution Advisor, to jointly conduct an application inventory and a feasibility study, and write a roll-out plan. After that, the new back office was installed in two datacenters: one internal and one co-located at SunGard, also in Brussels, for business continuity. The infrastructure is configured in active-active mode, with users connecting to both sites using Citrix XenApp load-balancing capability. The XenApp server farm automatic fails over in case of problems with either site or the connection.

Networking environment

- Citrix XenApp™, Enterprise Edition running on 100 IBM blade HS20 and HS21 servers
- Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003
- Vasco tokens for authentication
- IGEL thin clients and IBM desktops and laptops
- NetApp 3020c SAN for storage
- Belgacom WAN connections and failover connectivity

In two phases, all 240 outlets and remote offices were migrated to the XenApp infrastructure with Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003, running on 100 IBM servers. All applications, including Duo, the in-house developed Randstad front office application, are delivered using Citrix XenApp. End users' data was moved to a new, centralized NetApp storage area network (SAN), and PC desktops were replaced with Igel thin clients. Only the 300 employees at the headquarters are working in a more traditional infrastructure with PCs because of the large number and diversity of applications.

Lower costs and easier support thanks to Citrix XenApp

An important cost factor at Randstad Belgium was the support of IT infrastructure. After introducing Citrix XenApp the total costs of IT, especially for administration and support, have been reduced. "Although we drastically expanded in number of employees and grew to a one-billion-euro company, the IT staff has remained at about 45 employees. This includes IT personnel for infrastructure and also developers and business consultants," said Marc Van Harneveldt, IT manager at Randstad Belgium. "The number of help desk calls regarding infrastructure-related problems has dropped and decreases the pressure on the desktop support team."

The organization uses Citrix XenApp to deliver a full desktop over a WAN connection to thin clients at all subsidiaries. With all applications running on the centralized XenApp farms, there is no need for a local virus scanner, and Randstad Belgium has no longer take care of troublesome updates. In addition, broken thin clients can be replaced just by sending a new one to the remote office and connecting the cables to the new device. No configuration is necessary.

Standard work environments improve business flexibility

In the temporary employment sector it is quite normal for employees to switch functions often or go to another region to advance their careers or just to be closer to home. The same is true within the offices, where employees may move to another desktop in the building for a few hours to work without interruptions. The virtualized desktop delivered by Citrix XenApp enables the ultimate freedom to work anywhere with exactly the same work environment.

"The employees in the field organization use about 600 laptops. However, these systems are running in 'Citrix mode' where only a published desktop on XenApp is used," continued Van Harneveldt. "The work environment on the laptops is exactly the same as on the thin clients and the remaining PCs in the headquarters. They just connect to the corporate network using Citrix Secure Gateway - which is a standard component of Citrix XenApp - and launch a published desktop. This brings true mobility and flexibility without important information being stored on the local hard disk of the laptops. We now have an infrastructure that has become truly flexible, and even opening a new office or integrating an office after a merger is very easy."

Laptops are also used to work from home using the Citrix virtualized desktop. These laptops have additional security with the use of Vasco tokens that integrate seamlessly with Secure Gateway. Van Harneveldt noted, "Working from home is part of the function for the management team and board of directors, who can now avoid traffic jams and be flexible with their office hours. But working from home is especially important for the operational and branch managers. We have employment services and stand-by personnel for specific customers in hospitals and production plants who have to be available 24 hours a day including weekends."

“Our employees are very enthusiastic about their work environment,” he concluded. “They experience better application performance, don’t have to worry about backing up or securing their data, and can work anywhere.”

Applications delivered

- Microsoft® Office 2000
- Client Access 5.7 for main-frame access
- Microsoft® Internet Explorer®
- IBM Lotus Notes - groupware application
- Seagull Software Jwalk to transform applications from green-screen to graphical
- Duo front office in-house-developed ERP solution

About Citrix XenApp

Citrix XenApp™, a member of the Citrix Delivery Center™ product family, is the industry’s de facto standard for delivering Windows®-based applications with the best performance, security and cost savings. XenApp is the most complete application virtualization system available. It offers the ability to virtualize applications on both the client side and server side, delivering them on demand based on the user, the application or the location (online or offline).

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