



AudioNova INTERNATIONAL

Virtual ICT platform foundation for faster growth at Audionova

CHALLENGE

A growth strategy requires a reliable and flexible ICT environment that can be managed centrally. At the same time, Audionova uses specific audiometry software that has to be installed locally.

SOLUTION

VMware vSOM enables Audionova to make optimum use of its virtual platform and quickly adapt to new requirements. The company also uses VMware Horizon Mirage to roll out upgrades and new software to its 1,300 shops across Europe.

RESULTS

Audionova has a full understanding of its virtual environment and can therefore respond quickly to new developments. In addition to providing extra efficiency, this approach also yields significant savings on hardware and management costs. Despite this central ICT approach, the company is able to roll out software and updates for all of its shops in Europe in one go. This means that everyone within the organization is working with the latest version and that customers can rest assured the hearing tests are reliable and that their hearing aids are always optimally configured.

In a short space of time, Audionova International has grown into one of the key players in the European market for hearing aids. Set up in the Netherlands under the name Schoonenberg Gehoorcomfort, the company now has over 1,300 shops in 12 countries and ambitions for further growth. The aim is to achieve the leading position in Europe. IT plays a crucial role for the company's operations and in supporting the retail network in this growth process. Specific activities, such as performing hearing tests and configuring hearing aids in the shops, require local audiometry software that Audionova wants to manage centrally. VMware offers the company the necessary technology for this.

Due to Audionova International's rapid growth, the size of the server environment increased rapidly too. To support the growth and business in the best possible way, over 200 physical servers were in use at one point. Despite this size, the environment was very well organized and manageable. This was a deliberate choice, because IT is not a core activity. It was also the reason why Audionova was not enthusiastic about virtualization at the start. The staff at Audionova have fairly little knowledge of IT and thought that virtualization would lead to more complexity. It was also a relatively new technology at the time.

Stability and flexibility

The rapid growth of the company changed the situation. More and more shops opened across Europe. This led to a greater demand for a flexible, high-availability IT environment, which was difficult to achieve with physical servers. Although it was relatively easy to buy extra servers, the inevitable overcapacity proved to be a problem. The required shop IT also required a redundant infrastructure, because a failure would reduce the service level and cause Audionova to lose revenue. The combination of these factors resulted in the decision to implement server virtualization based on VMware vSphere. A virtual platform offered the required stability and flexibility, at lower prices.

Effective operational management

Audionova is constantly on the lookout for optimization opportunities within its virtual platform. They want to make the best possible use of the

resources available, while continuing to grow rapidly. VMware vSphere with Operations Management (vSOM) helps them achieve this. They now have a good understanding of the environment and can identify potential bottlenecks quickly and respond rapidly to new developments. Increasing capacity is not a problem, and applications can be deployed quickly. They can also test new software or versions quickly by setting up a test environment in nearly no time. Besides saving money on hardware, the choice to implement virtualization has also significantly reduced the operational management costs. In both cases, the estimated saving is around 30%.

Focus on costs

The focus on cost reduction was reinforced by changes in the reimbursement for hearing aids. The reimbursement system changed, causing a drop in hearing aid prices. This gave Audionova even more reason to be vigilant about costs. At the same time,

VMWARE CASE STUDY

“VMware Mirage is an enabler for the business because new audio software can be deployed faster. Audionova’s customers can rest assured that the tests are up to date and reliable. Audionova can also be more flexible now in its choice of suppliers, because new software is very easy to roll out. What’s more, test data is now available from a central location. This makes scientific research easier and provides valuable data for product development and innovation.”

ROLL-OUT ENVIRONMENT

VMware ESXi 5

- Windows Server 2008, 2012 (all versions)
- Microsoft SQL Server 2008, 2012 (all versions)
- Exchange 2007

VMware Horizon Mirage 5.1

- Windows 7
- NOAH including Vendor modules

they also faced a number of IT challenges. They had to upgrade to Windows 7, and the audiometry software that they use in the shops for hearing tests needed to be upgraded. Rollouts and upgrades of software to the shops are done centrally, so desktop virtualization based on Horizon (with View) was an obvious choice. This was not possible, however, because the audiometry software has to be installed locally. The tests use beeps, which have to be presented without latency. A small delay in the connection is not acceptable, because this would make the test results unreliable. Providing images via the cloud was therefore not an option.

100% control of version management

In the search for a solution, the company came across VMware Horizon Mirage. While the software for audio tests and the hearing aid configuration is on a local PC, the environment can be managed entirely from a central location. This fits perfectly with Audionova’s internal approach. The shop IT consists of a PC, printer and specific audiological equipment. If something breaks, the entire device is replaced and the software image is installed and configured remotely. Horizon Mirage eliminates the need to carry out software installations and provide on-site support. Updates are now rolled out for all of Europe in one go. They can now also rest assured that every shop is using the right software versions. In the past, DVDs were distributed and then installed by the staff. This process was prone to error and placed considerable pressure on the service desk. It also meant that different versions were in use. Choosing Horizon Mirage means that software can run locally and Audionova has 100% control of the version management.

Business enabler

Using Horizon Mirage to manage desktops centrally has significantly improved the performance of the equipment in the shops, while at the same time reducing the effort required to manage the software and the costs. But there are more advantages. The roll-out of Windows 7 went smoothly in all of the shops. Horizon Mirage is an enabler for the business because new software can be deployed faster. Customers of Audionova can rest assured that the tests are up to date and reliable. What’s more, Audionova can be even more flexible in its choice of suppliers because the roll-out of software is very simple. Lastly, test data is available at a central location now. This makes scientific research easier and provides valuable data for product development and innovation. VMware allows Audionova to focus all its attention on its growth strategy.

