



“We are now able to guarantee the continuity of our business and provide uninterrupted contact center services to customers. We have a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week service, and are able to guarantee and maintain a higher level of service.”

Frank Martien  
ICT Manager, ACC Heerlen

## ACC Heerlen builds uninterrupted contact center services with XenServer

About four years ago, the Dutch national healthcare insurance organization VGZ created a dedicated temporary customer contact center, AAC Heerlen, to support in the transition to a new insurance system that was going to be introduced in the Netherlands. To create the center, 250 employees including managers were selected and educated. After the new healthcare system was operational, VGZ decided to use AAC Heerlen's services on a permanent basis. In 2008 ACC Heerlen became an independent company and added new customers from government, quasi-government and commercial organizations, as well as its own brands of services such as MediZeker. ACC Heerlen now has 500 employees.

### The challenge – Create a highly available contact center

High availability of the IT infrastructure at ACC Heerlen is extremely important so that its contact center employees can help clients of the insurance company and other customers by accessing their information immediately. Most components and equipment in the datacenter, from the network and telephony infrastructure to emergency power supplies and cooling, were already made redundant. “The final step in creating a highly available contact center was consolidating our application servers. When a server failed it took the application down, with the worst case being loss of access to customer information, including the ability to update this information, which prevented us from servicing those customers,” said Frank Martien, ICT manager at ACC Heerlen. “We have service level agreements with our customers and needed a very stable and reliable infrastructure to fulfill them. We started looking for a server virtualization solution that would create reliable servers and a highly available contact center environment. To be able to offer 24-hour services, this environment must enable us to maintain systems without disruption.”



## Implementing Citrix XenServer, Platinum Edition

Together with Open Line, a Gold Citrix Solution Advisor, the IT staff of the organization started piloting Citrix® XenServer™, Platinum Edition with Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003 after developing a business case and an IT architecture. During the pilot, which was based on an earlier version of XenServer, the organization experienced a smooth upgrade to the latest version and got a very good feeling about how well the Citrix solution handles patches, upgrades and support. After stress, availability and functionality tests, the product proved that it fulfilled all requirements. “We decided to leave the final decision for XenServer to our IT staff, which had used another virtualization product for many years,” added Martien. “The IT staff at ACC Heerlen decided in favor of Citrix XenServer to virtualize our datacenter, thanks to its ease of use, many features and scalability.”

Now, three redundant HP DL380-G5 servers run 13 virtualized Windows Server 2003 systems with all kinds of server applications, from database services to Microsoft® Inter Information Server and Exchange Server, to the Witness Strategic Planning database and internal applications. In addition, the company was already running Citrix® XenApp™ on nine servers to deliver applications including Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer®, the Witness front end and the human resources management application for employees of the insurance organization.

### Virtualized datacenter runs with high performance

ACC Heerlen compared server virtualization solutions, but XenServer was the only product that supported the special hardware timers to provide telephony services over the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), necessary for the PABX telephone system. XenServer is able to streamline these SIP packages perfectly, as the product runs very close to the hardware layer of the physical system. XenServer proved to be six percent faster, which is crucial to provide Quality of Service for VoIP and time-critical data operations.

In addition, even during the pilot, the data-intensive Witness Strategic Planning application that uses a lot of resources started up three times faster than in the old situation with a dedicated server. Even the developer of the application was surprised with this result. The fast response of Witness actually provided the drive behind the business case for the virtualization project.

### Supporting stringent service level agreements with customers

Martien said, “We wanted to make sure that the complete virtual environment was very stable, so we tested the systems with an extremely high load, which was higher than real-life users could ever generate. This way we knew for sure that everything stayed up and running in worst case scenarios.” Live migration with Citrix® XenMotion™ enables the organization to maintain the servers and applications in production, just by moving them to another virtual machine. Even active VoIP conversations and SQL Server®-based database reporting are not affected by the transfer to another server. Also, provisioning of operating system workloads, a capability included in XenServer Platinum Edition, enables the IT staff to switch a server off and start another server from that workload for greater flexibility. All server workloads are stored on a new storage area network from EMC.

### Key benefits

- Improves business continuity
- Increases datacenter flexibility and scalability
- Supports stringent service level agreements
- Simplifies system and network administration
- Lowers hardware, software and IT staff expenses

### Workloads delivered

- Microsoft SQL Server
- Microsoft Exchange Server
- Microsoft Internet Information Server
- Witness Strategic Planning from Verint Systems, a workforce management application
- File/print services
- HR and payroll solutions
- Reporting services

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### Cost savings and improved IT efficiency as a bonus

The return on investment of the XenServer infrastructure is very fast and paid for itself within months. ACC Heerlen also saves on IT expenses thanks to the virtualized datacenter. “We saved not only on hardware by reducing the number of servers from 13 to three, but also on operating system software. In addition, we are able to optimize server capability and reduce datacenter energy use,” added Martien. “But most important, I don’t have sleepless nights any more about hardware failures that could bring down our business. We are prepared for calamities and in the near future can switch over to another datacenter within minutes. This used to require two or three days.”

The efficiency of the IT staff at ACC Heerlen has improved, thanks to the ease of use of Citrix XenServer, Platinum Edition. Workload provisioning is just point-and-click, and migrating servers to the virtual environment with the XenServer P2V tool is very simple.

### Future plans

“Now that we have created a flexible, open and modular datacenter, we can be the model for other organizations in our branch. We believe that we now have an innovative environment to build new creative standards and solutions. We just needed to start thinking virtual,” Martien concluded.

### Networking environment

- Citrix XenServer, Platinum Edition running on three HP DL380 G3/G4 systems
- Citrix® XenApp™, Enterprise Edition running on nine HP servers
- Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003
- EMC Clarion CX3-10 SAN
- 400 HP T5730 thin clients and HP DC 7100 fat clients



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