

Agile work is working for the Municipality of Milan

Citrix Workspace makes its vision for the future possible

The right tool at the right time

The Municipality of Milan sets the tone for how a forward-thinking local government organization can focus its efforts to adapt to ever-changing realities. As early as 2016, it started on a path of enabling employees to better serve the citizens that call the municipality home, while also improving the day-to-day work experience for its staff. The key to this lies within a well-orchestrated strategy for digital transformation and how that brings with it the tools and practices needed to adapt. As the global pandemic was taking the world by surprise in early 2020, the municipality was well positioned to react and still be able to serve its citizens through remote working solutions, without compromising on the safety of its employees.

During a health emergency, the public needs to continuously rely on the services provided by municipalities. The Municipality of Milan has managed to ensure continuity of its services, even in the darkest period of the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling thousands of employees to take advantage of agile working options in just a few months. A result achieved by significantly speeding up the pre-existing workstation virtualization project, for which the municipal administration had already chosen [Citrix Workspace](#).

There are currently about six thousand Municipality of Milan employees equipped with virtual workstations that enable them to operate anywhere, on any computer. Agile working, therefore, is now a reality for over fifty percent of those with a fixed desk. By reconciling staff needs, increasing productivity and reducing vehicular traffic, agile working offers benefits that will remain even after the health emergency is over. "Public administration is often seen as a dinosaur compared to private companies. In some cases it is true, but in the case of the Municipality of Milan it is certainly not," comments Aniello Donnarumma, Head of the Special Projects Unit of the Municipality of Milan.



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Main benefits

- The Municipality of Milan has made agile working possible for 6,000 employees, offering greater flexibility whilst increasing productivity and resilience. Most of the virtualized workstations were activated in just three months in response to the COVID-19 emergency, allowing the municipality to guarantee the continuity of its services and protect the health of employees
- The Citrix solution proved to be easily scalable, with no IT infrastructure issues. The ease of use has allowed for rapid adoption by the municipality's staff, contributing to the organization's digital transformation

Greater flexibility and productivity

With thirteen thousand employees spread out over more than 700 different locations, the Municipality of Milan has countless opportunities to take advantage of the benefits of agile working, made possible through the use of virtual workstations. Whether it's facilitating meetings between colleagues, enabling individual employees to move between different locations for service reasons or the prospect of working from home or, in fact, working from anywhere, the solutions, resources and training invested in agile working pay dividends.

Employees authorized for agile working can now organize meetings without leaving their desks. They can work in a different office using any available PC, from which they can access their digital desk and all related files. Working from home, they can recreate their workstation on any family PC and, using their smartphone, they can interact with colleagues if necessary, even if they are traveling. In all cases, the flexibility made possible by agile working translates into significant time savings (less moving about, less downtime, fewer complications in terms of document management) and greater availability of human resources.

"The virtualization of the workstations meets the needs of employees and, at the same time, by reducing inefficiencies, it means that people actually become more productive, with benefits for the municipality as a public body and for the public who uses its services," summarizes Sara Belli, Interoperability Project Management at SIAD - the Information Systems and Digital Agenda Department of the Municipality of Milan.

Emergency-proof scalability in healthcare

The Municipality of Milan started experimenting with agile working in 2018. After an initial VPN-based attempt, which revealed that solution's inadequacy, the administration decided in 2019 to adopt a platform to create virtual workstations. It went on to put out a public call for tenders which led to the adoption of Citrix Workspace.

A sudden acceleration of the project was needed in February 2020 when, as a result of the COVID-19 emergency, even the Municipality of Milan had to close its offices and quickly enable most of its employees to work from home. In just three months, the number of virtual desks jumped from 1,200 to nearly six thousand. "During the emergency we activated up to five hundred virtual workstations in a single day," explains Aniello Donnarumma. "A particularly fond memory from that period is the thanks I received from a colleague from Codogno who, in the darkest days of the health emergency, with the army guarding their town, was able to find a tiny bit of normality in continuing to work from home."

The impact on the IT infrastructure of the municipality was managed without difficulty, as Luigi Pisacane, IT Manager of the Municipality of Milan recalls: "Our data center was already based on hyper-converged technology, which makes it easy to increase the processing capacity needed to deploy virtual workstations. In retrospect, we also saw that the increase in traffic on our network was also very limited. We obviously had to modify assistance procedures for our users, adapting them to requests coming from remote workstations, but everything worked very well."

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**Sara Belli
Interoperability Project
Management at SIAD
Municipality of Milan**

A big step forward on the road to digital transformation

For some time, the Municipality of Milan has been engaged in a process of digital transformation. The use of virtual workstations is part of this, as Roberta Cocco, Councillor for Digital Transformation and Civic Services, explains: “If you want something to work it has to be familiar and easy to use. We started early on this path of digitization and we’ve found that moving workstations to a virtual environment keeps it familiar and easy to use but it also opens up a whole world of possibility.”

The increase in the number of virtual workstations has been accompanied by a staff training initiative which included a series of videos produced to illustrate the benefits employees would be experiencing. “It’s been a success,” says Sara Belli. “Many of our colleagues did not have great IT skills, but today the open tickets only concern real technical problems, no longer requests for clarification. Furthermore, employees have become more aware of the issue of IT security. In short, the digital soul of the Municipality of Milan has come out,” summarizes Sara.

At the same time as the virtualization of workstations, the Municipality of Milan has also promoted the use of cloud tools such as Microsoft OneDrive for saving work documents. “In order to achieve true mobility, employees don’t have to be tied to their computer’s hard drive,” Aniello notes.

Future-proof benefits

About a year after the COVID-19 emergency began, the Municipality of Milan can say that its experience with virtual workstations has been successful. The main part of the project can now be considered complete: the share of agile working for each of the six thousand authorized employees has gradually been increased from three to twelve days a month, based on the results. The increase in productivity will soon be measured in a quantitative way as well, for the purposes of drafting the Operational Plan for Agile Working (POLA), while savings are also expected in terms of hardware equipment for employees and simplified IT management when it comes to software updates, for example.

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“During the emergency we activated up to five hundred virtual workstations in a single day. A sure benefit is the continuity of service which we are able to support remotely. It is very timely, and we are proud we have made it happen with this administration.”

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