

PATRIZIA supports the global real estate industry with Citrix

Citrix Cloud keeps operations running during exceptional events

The Business Problem

PATRIZIA AG uses Citrix technology to provide desktops and applications to its offices around the world efficiently and reliably. Together with its IT partner SVA, the real estate investment company developed a hybrid cloud architecture that combines optimal performance for users with minimal administrative intervention. The flexible solution enables PATRIZIA to not only react faster to new business requirements, but also remain operational during exceptional events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Investment management firm PATRIZIA AG has been an active player in the European real estate market for more than 35 years. The company offers a wide range of services covering the purchasing, management, value growth and sale of residential and commercial properties for institutions and professional investors as well as private individuals. PATRIZIA currently manages property and infrastructure assets worth more than €44 billion, predominately acting as an investment manager for insurers, pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, savings banks and cooperative banking institutions.

Founded in 1984, the company employs around 800 people and is headquartered in Augsburg, Germany. It also operates more than 20 other subsidiaries across four continents. True to its motto “Business is local”, PATRIZIA has a presence in the most important European cities and other locations around the world. This international presence is a key factor in the company’s success. Having local, competent representatives makes it far easier to establish relationships with domestic investors and to recognize market developments at an early stage.



Industry
Real Estate

Location
Germany

Citrix products

- Citrix Gateway
- Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops

Key Benefits

- PATRIZIA used Citrix to simplify the management and provision of applications for more than 20 subsidiaries worldwide
- Users at every office benefit from an optimal user experience when working with their business applications
- The hybrid cloud solution enables the company to react to new business requirements faster than ever before
- PATRIZIA remains operational even in exceptional circumstances. Following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, all of its employees were able to begin working from home without interruption

Central application provisioning for worldwide subsidiaries

Close proximity to customers and a global outlook have always been at the heart of PATRIZIA's IT strategy. "We have to provide not only all of our offices around the world, but also our numerous mobile employees with continuous, fast and secure access to all of the data and applications they need," says Stefan Zieher, Associate Infrastructure Director at PATRIZIA. "Which is why we have used Citrix technology for more than ten years. Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops enables us to provide applications and desktops for every end-user device centrally, and so provide optimal support for users on-site."

From Microsoft Office and SAP, to reporting tools and document management software, all the company's key business applications now run on a Citrix environment hosted in a data center in Munich. PATRIZIA's users can access their virtual workspaces from anywhere they choose. Even mobile access was supported from very early on. Many employees at PATRIZIA are often on the road, and Citrix allows them to utilize all of the company's IT resources while out in the field. Web access to internal systems is secured using Citrix Gateway appliances as well as a multi-layer user authentication system.

Modernizing the Citrix infrastructure with partner SVA

Over recent years, demand on the Citrix infrastructure has risen continuously due to a growing number of employees and acquisitions at home and abroad, and the introduction of new business applications. As part of the migration to the latest versions of Windows and Office, the IT team also planned to move to the latest release of Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops.

With support from its IT partner, SVA System Vertrieb Alexander GmbH, PATRIZIA developed a concept to prepare the Citrix environment for future business requirements. Consultants from SVA first took an inventory of the existing infrastructure. Then, they defined the company's objectives for the future and prepared for the implementation of the new environment.

"There were three things we particularly wanted to focus on," says Mario Theis, Project Manager at SVA.

"Simplifying the management of the environment, improving the user experience, and increasing business agility."

New technologies minimize administration

Two of the most important new features in the current environment are Citrix App Layering and Machine Creation Services. These technologies help PATRIZIA to radically simplify the provisioning and administration of applications and virtual machines.

"The Citrix solution enabled us to take the actions necessary to protect the health of our employees right away. Our business processes continued smoothly from the very first day."

**Stefan Zieher
Associate Director
Infrastructure
PATRIZIA AG**

In the previous setup, the servers in the Citrix environment were still installed and updated using a software distribution tool. “Unfortunately, this meant that the individual servers were often inconsistent,” remembers Stefan Zieher. “So we were always getting errors we found difficult to localize.” With Machine Creation Services, all the virtual machines are created from the same master image and are therefore always identical. This minimizes the number of possible error sources and simplifies troubleshooting. Another advantage: changes to the environment only need to be made to a single image.

Application Layering has also simplified how the master image is managed. The layering architecture decouples the individual system layers of a virtual machine and allows administrators to manage the operating system, applications, user settings and specific platform tools independently of one another. “For example, we can update certain applications frequently if we need to without touching the rest of the environment,” says Zieher. “We also only have to look after a single Windows layer for all of our users. This relieves an enormous amount of our daily workload and makes providing updates, patches and new software versions faster.”

From on-premises to hybrid cloud

One challenge of the existing environment was application performance in the company’s geographically distant subsidiaries. Users in Asia struggled with relatively long reaction times when accessing the data center in Munich. In order to reduce the impact of this network latency, the SVA specialists recommended installing an additional Citrix environment using Microsoft Azure in Asia.

“Our idea was to bring the applications physically closer to PATRIZIA staff in Hong Kong and South Korea,” explains Mathias Kowalkowski, Senior Consultant – End User Computing at SVA. “Citrix made it very easy to implement this hybrid concept. In the Citrix cloud architecture, workloads can be moved to different public cloud platforms as needed. At the same time, Citrix supports comprehensive management of on-premises and cloud resources.”

When it came to creating the Citrix environment in Microsoft Azure, the fact that PATRIZIA was already working with Application Layering paid off. The project partners simply needed to reconfigure the platform layer of the existing master image to create a new version that would be compatible with Azure cloud.

For all future applications, they will only need to make one additional click in Citrix Enterprise Layer Manager. This will then publish two new master images. One for the VMware vSphere infrastructure in the PATRIZIA data center and one for the cloud environment in Microsoft Azure.

“Our business has changed very dynamically over recent decades. The Citrix architecture helps us keep pace with the changes, scale our capacities flexibly and fulfill our employees’ needs.”

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Infrastructure
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“The amount of administration required for the hybrid environment really is minimal, and the users have consistent application versions and settings in both worlds,” adds Stefan Zieher. “But the main thing is that we have increased IT performance for our offices in Asia considerably. Our staff there can now access all of their applications much faster.”

Reacting flexibly, even in extraordinary situations

This expansion of the Citrix environment into the cloud means that PATRIZIA is now able to implement new business requirements even faster. For example, if a new office is brought into the company through an acquisition, PATRIZIA can either supply the users with desktops and applications via the data center in Munich or via the nearest Azure region. Onboarding additional users is very simple either way.

Regardless of whether ten or 100 new employees need to be added, the users simply need to have the Citrix Workspace app on their device, which gives them immediate access to all of PATRIZIA’s IT applications.

“Our business has changed very dynamically over recent decades. The Citrix architecture helps us keep pace with the changes, scale our capacities flexibly and fulfill our employees’ needs,” summarizes Stefan Zieher.

PATRIZIA can also react immediately to unforeseen circumstances. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all 800 of its employees worldwide switched to working from home. “Thanks to the Citrix infrastructure, it was a fast and uncomplicated process,” says Zieher. “Our users have secure access to their entire personal working environment with all of their applications and data from home. This way we could take the actions necessary to protect the health of our employees right away. Our business processes continued smoothly from the very first day. Even in this situation, our partners and customers could rely on us to continue providing the superlative service they are used to.”

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