

QNB Group creates workplace flexibility

Transforming banking culture with Citrix

Citrix enables Qatar's leading bank to provide users with a consistent work-from-home experience through the COVID-19 pandemic

Creating a secure and adaptable workplace

Qatar National Bank (QNB) has worked with Citrix since 2015. Ayman Al-Hout, Domain Support Manager, Qatar National Bank says the engagement goes beyond technology: "Technology changes. Few businesses can supply the enterprise-grade support and vision we require. It's Citrix's ability to provide both that establishes a point of difference."

The bank worked with Citrix Platinum Solution Advisor Information Communication Technology (ICT) to swiftly and successfully deploy the Citrix solution. Today, QNB operations are underpinned by Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops, Citrix Endpoint Management and Citrix ADC. Critically for a bank, Citrix ADC enables QNB to easily apply security policies that help end and avoid application breaches, without impacting app delivery speeds.

Together, the Citrix solutions allow QNB to provide employees with the desktop and application environments needed to run the bank's day-to-day operations. The infrastructure enables QNB to be flexible, secure and keen to adapt to changing circumstances.

"The year 2020 was riddled with challenges that none of us could have anticipated but we were keen to be flexible," says Ramy Ghanem, Senior IT Officer, QNB Group. "We were very fortunate to have our Citrix infrastructure in place as COVID-19 struck," he adds.

Scaling from a few hundred to thousands of users working from home

Just within days of realizing a national lockdown was imposed, QNB decided to enhance its Citrix infrastructure. "We went from a few hundred users to thousands, almost overnight," says Mr. Al-Hout. "This impacted all parts of the bank – from IT, to security, management and sales. It meant everyone had access to the apps and desktop environment they needed to work effectively from home."



Industry

Financial Services

Location

Qatar

Citrix products

- Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops
- Citrix Endpoint Management
- Citrix ADC

Key Benefits

- Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops enables QNB to deliver and manage a modern digital workspace to its branch offices, overseas and in Qatar
- Citrix Endpoint Management brings every app and endpoint into one unified view
- Citrix ADC addresses load balancing concerns, providing a high-quality user experience

“We changed nothing but the server count. We went from two servers to 13. The design, the way we manage the environment, the security layer, all of that remained exactly the same,” says Mr. Al-Hout. This was only possible due to the work done over the previous years, in building an architectural plan that could scale whenever needed.

Using Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops, QNB employees get the same secure, virtual experience across operating systems. Al-Hout and team are able to manage it all from a single console. The response from users has been excellent.

“It’s beyond their expectations. It’s the same experience they would have in their office, no different. We haven’t had to reengineer any of the applications,” says Mr. Ghanem. “If anything, we’ve seen a lift in productivity. Staff are comfortable logging on earlier and later in the day. The workplace is more flexible.”

Flexibility that goes beyond business continuity

Mr. Al-Hout and Mr. Ghanem emphasize the point that this is not a business continuity exercise. Workplace flexibility is a long-term benefit. QNB is able to portray itself as a progressive employer, helping to attract talent.

“We have the FIFA 2022 World Cup coming up next year. Qatar will be extremely busy and local business will have to adjust; QNB’s business continuity will not be affected,” says Mr. Ghanem. “Citrix gives us that option.”

Mr. Al-Hout says the engagement with Citrix is a central component of QNB’s IT strategy. Regardless of the technology, he explains, the bank favored stronger, deeper relationships with key vendors: “There should be no limit to our technical discussions. For any bank, security and control are critical. With Citrix we have a partner that understands this. It knows how important it is for us to be secure, and to have zero downtime. When we call Citrix, we get straight through to the person we need. That builds trust. We are not just buying a product. We are buying trust.”

Mr. Nasser Alhayki, Senior Manager of Technical Support Services, Qatar National Bank emphasizes that despite challenges posed by COVID-19, 2020 was a productive year that witnessed major accomplishments and key initiatives that best suit QNB’s business continuity and day-to-day operations.

QNB Group, the largest financial institution in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region, has become the first banking institution to record total assets of QAR1.0 trillion (USD282 billion), for the first time in the history of the region, representing an increase of 9% from last year. The bank remains ambitious and globally acquisitive.

“International expansion is one of the cornerstones of our strategy to become a leading global bank by 2030,” says Adel Al Malki, General Manager, Information Technology, QNB Group.

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Ayman Al-Hout
Domain Support Manager
Qatar National Bank

QNB Group currently operates in 1,000 locations with more than 28,000 employees. Expanding business is the flagship of the group as part of its global strategy, digital transformation and workplace culture. It operates in a growing network throughout Qatar and international branches across Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

“Our vision is to become a leading bank in MEASEA, with the most secure and comprehensive technology, continuous improvement through innovation and the refinement of our offering and services,” says Mr. Al Hayki.

“Based on the group’s consistent strong financial performance and its expanding international presence, QNB is currently ranked as the most valuable bank brand in the Middle East and Africa, according to Brand Finance Magazine,” says Mr. Al Hayki.

“Each subsidiary has its own infrastructure, but the strategy and choices of QNB influence all,” says Mr. Al-Hout.

QNB aims to accelerate digital transformation of the banking sector. As customers move toward digital channels via online or mobile banking, the group looks forward to replicate a similar experience for its staff. The goal was to enable QNB staff to work from anywhere, while accessing the necessary applications and workflows. This will not only create a more dynamic and agile workplace, but also ensure business continuity.

“There is an opportunity to reimagine how we work,” says Mr. Al-Hout.

Enterprise Sales

North America | 800-424-8749

Worldwide | +1 408-790-8000

Locations

Corporate Headquarters | 851 Cypress Creek Road, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309, United States

Silicon Valley | 4988 Great America Parkway, Santa Clara, CA 95054, United States

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