



A private bank starts working from home

Donner & Reuschel makes it possible with Windows Virtual Desktop

Banking and Capital Markets

DONNER & REUSCHEL offers customized solutions for a demanding clientele: entrepreneurs, private banking customers, institutional investors, real estate customers and capital markets customers. As part of a larger Microsoft 365 migration project, the company also switched to Windows Virtual Desktop to design its customer services even more flexible and efficient in the future.

This means, for example, that external employees can be provided with fully-fledged virtual workspaces and access to internal systems. At the same time, this move minimizes the operating costs for the company's internal IT department while maintaining its customary high IT security standards.

The challenge: Remaining resourceful in a time of uncertainty

In early 2020, Donner & Reuschel's rollout of Microsoft 365, including Surface devices, was in full swing, as was the migration of its servers to the cloud. Then on Friday, March 13, Nico Pantelmann, Director of the IT Governance and IT Management department at Donner & Reuschel, received a phone call. "It was Andreas Weinberger, our Head of IT, saying that 'the rollout isn't happening fast enough. We must assume that at any moment, we'll have to send all our employees to work from home'." And Weinberger would be proven right. Donner & Reuschel's IT team spent the weekend planning an unprecedented move: setting up approximately 660 users to work from home in just two days. The IT team configured computers like they were on an assembly line. After loading the equipment into cars, Weinberger and Pantelmann's team brought Microsoft Surface devices, docking stations, and power adapters to various collection points in Munich and Hamburg, where the bank's employees could pick them up. "It was a major logistical operation, but it was definitely worth it in the end," Pantelmann says. "When the lockdown forced our Hamburg location to close completely, we also took our own equipment so we could carry on rolling out the project." A week later, the division heads were to report on their teams' readiness. But thanks to the efforts of Wein-



berger and Pantelmann, everyone was more than ready to work: day-to-day operations could continue, and the migration to Microsoft Azure was complete. “The entire company was up to speed,” Weinberger reports. “We were fully able to work, and our business continuity management was a complete success.”

As part of the ongoing Microsoft 365 project, the company planned to make the shift from Citrix to Windows Virtual Desktop, but the COVID-19 health crisis meant that this sometimes had to be put on hold to focus on other project strands. The shift to Windows Virtual Desktop was necessitated by the major performance problems with the Citrix solution that plagued the project team comprising Donner & Reuschel’s IT team, Azure cloud experts Orange Networks GmbH, and Citrix and Windows Virtual Desktop

specialists at sepago GmbH. At the same time, Donner & Reuschel was itself experiencing a variety of problems due to the weak performance of its servers and the resulting lack of agility. “In the past, when our risk managers would calculate risk models, programs like Excel would often reach their limits,” Weinberger says. What’s more, Donner & Reuschel employs approximately 540 people. Together with all external consultants, auditors, and other service providers, this means that up to 700 people require access to the company’s systems. “Equipping such a large set of users with our own devices wasn’t economically viable,” Weinberger adds. “When Windows Virtual Desktop hit the market in September 2019, we had the ideal tool with which to solve this problem as part of our bank and IT strategy. Since we had already settled on a Microsoft technology stack years before, this was a perfect fit.”



Windows Virtual Desktop has taken us to a whole new level of performance, providing us with the technology we need to manage new ideas as they arise. Even if at some point the regulators manage to upset all of this, the technology is advanced enough to make life a lot easier and allow us to react with greater agility.

Andreas Weinberger, Head of IT,
Donner & Reuschel



The solution: Providing individual clients for simple and secure systems access

After the health crisis delayed several parts of the project, which in turn prevented a widespread rollout of Windows Virtual Desktop, the project is once again picking up the pace. Since Donner & Reuschel was already using Microsoft technologies, the company had no problem combining Windows Virtual Desktop into the overall architecture and pressing on with the project.

The administrator clients were rolled out prior to the health crisis, and these are now being followed by developer clients as well as standard clients for internal and external users. Each client is tailored to the needs of its user group with everything from individual apps to standardized images made available on Windows 10 computers. “Anytime we introduce or expand new software

packages, we must adhere to strict regulations. Just because applications are running smoothly at the moment doesn’t mean we won’t run into problems when we install the next Windows update,” Pantelmann says. “Using Windows Virtual Desktop, employees can now continue to work without difficulty with frozen release versions while their Surface devices themselves are fully up to date.” Now that Microsoft handles maintenance and provision, Donner & Reuschel’s IT expenditures related to testing, approvals, and further development of the basic clients have gone down. This is also noticeable when it comes to client administration: since Windows Virtual Desktop seamlessly works with the Microsoft world, virtual and physical clients alike can now be administered through Intune. “Without having to furnish our partners and ser-

vice providers with additional hardware, we've now established a basic logic for the quick and easy provision of internal and external banking workspaces. This puts us at a considerable strategic advantage," Weinberger says.

Within the stringently regulated world of banking, the Microsoft environment also scores highly in terms of security. "For weeks now, we've been frantically trying to bombard our colleagues with test phishing emails. Germany's Federal Financial Supervisory Authority, or BaFin, requires that we test our cybersecurity setup at regular intervals. But we just can't get the phishing emails through our email trail because by design the majority are intercepted right at the start," Pantelmann says. "This alone shows how secure the system is."

Changing tools right in the middle of a project paid off for Donner & Reuschel. "Looking to the future, Windows Virtual Desktop is a key part of enhancing the scalability of our service-oriented workforce," Weinberger says. This success is also due to the fruitful collaboration within the project team. "Following a brief training period and extremely effective onboarding by the Microsoft Lighthouse team, the project team was able to start setting up the Windows

Virtual Desktop environment," reports Astrit Dibrani, Manager Solutions Sales and Head of Business Development at Orange Networks. "It was simply a perfect match."

Markus Link, Sales & Account Manager at sepago, agrees: "We've been working with Orange Networks for many years as part of other customer projects. We know exactly what we, sepago, can do and are also familiar with the expertise offered by Orange Networks. Joining forces allows us to offer the customer the best solution." Donner & Reuschel was also pleased by the positive collaboration. "As a customer working with a variety of partners, you often experience really crazy things," Pantelmann adds. "That's why it was so nice to see such a healthy partner-to-partner relationship. The result was a superb solution delivered at an amazing pace. I've never seen user adoption happen as fast as it did for us." This is what many years of partnership and specialist knowledge about the IT landscape can achieve. After all, prior to its involvement in rolling out Windows Virtual Desktop, Orange Networks helped establish the Azure environment at Donner & Reuschel in the first place. And some credit for the success must go to the numerous practical training events offered by sepago after the project's completion.



Rolling out Windows Virtual Desktop was very much a collaborative process. Everything went smoothly and we can be proud of the result. We're well prepared for the future and can use the tool on a broad scale. What's more, this project's progress was aided by the support and resources of the Microsoft Lighthouse project and by our partners Orange Networks and sepago.

Nico Pantelmann, Director of the IT Governance and IT Management department,
Donner & Reuschel

