

sustainability

a new world of work

redefining openness and collaboration

GasTerra puts corporate social responsibility at the very core of its business. It is the leading trader of natural gas in the Netherlands, maximizing the value of the country's significant natural gas reserves and promoting production from smaller gas fields

Since deregulation, the gas trading market has become increasingly dynamic, and GasTerra itself reflects this dynamism. With just 200 employees, the company procured 83 billion cubic meters of natural gas in 2012 for both Dutch and overseas usage, with turnover of over €23 billion.

In 2012, GasTerra and Atos worked closely together to redefine the workplace. The company has developed significantly since it was spun off from the Gasunie public private partnership, owner of the natural gas transmission network in the Netherlands, in 2005. The spin-off was originally prompted by regulatory change and industry liberalization.

Today, GasTerra combines an agile entrepreneurialism with its fifty-year trading heritage. The overall character and behavior of the company is strongly influenced by the social and environmental responsibility championed by its senior management team.

The transformation of GasTerra reached a new milestone in 2013 with the opening of its new office in Groningen in the North of the Netherlands. The way people behave and perform is directly influenced by the way their working environment is designed, and the new building is a showcase for positive social engineering in the workplace.

Atos and GasTerra had worked closely together from the original foundation of the company, building a relationship; learning about each other; and giving Atos the opportunity to establish a solid reputation as an IT service partner.



Building relationships and reputations

Following the spin-off from Gasunie, the inherited GasTerra IT infrastructure and practice presented opportunities for immediate rationalization and improvement. The new company needed a new attitude to IT and Atos was soon involved in the change.

Johan Stähler, management team member responsible for IT strategy at GasTerra, is convinced that companies succeed by doing what they do best. "GasTerra is not an IT or an IT service company. In many respects, we are closer to financial services with our core business in trading natural gas. We needed clarity of IT vision and efficiency in execution – but that did not mean we needed to own the operational IT skills."

For Stähler, contracting out to third party specialists does not mean losing control. "Right across the energy sector there is a long tradition of working with highly-qualified specialists – and for IT it's no different: the important thing is to set the rules and to maintain transparency."

GasTerra engaged Atos early, with specific responsibility for infrastructure service and support and for the management of a number of business-critical trading applications. Overall, GasTerra needed to achieve a radical improvement in the provision of all IT services, driving out cost and inefficiency and, most importantly, boosting the agility they needed for their fast-moving business.

Frans Peters, the Atos account director rates communication as the key to effective business relationships. "As an experienced IT service company, Atos had all the capabilities and processes needed to assume overall responsibility for the GasTerra infrastructure – but having the skills does not automatically mean being able to deliver the services. When you are building relationships, it's the point of contact and the quality of communication which make the difference."

With these initial infrastructure and application management contracts, Atos established:

- ▶ A single point of communications contact for the GasTerra team – ensuring that whenever an incident or change in requirement occurred, appropriate action could be taken swiftly
- ▶ Clear and transparent Service Level Agreements for all contracted management and support functions – ensuring that GasTerra expectations could be set, monitored and met.

These two basic building blocks allowed GasTerra and Atos to begin building a relationship from the start, which established a common language for service supply and demand.

Sustainability: New Vision – New Relationship

Between 2005 and 2012, GasTerra continually developed their business perimeter. While maintaining their primary focus on principal and small site natural gas production in the Netherlands, they also expanded into "green gas" – a natural and important bi-product in the strong Dutch agricultural economy. GasTerra also increased its overseas activity, selling gas across the EU, with Germany and the UK particularly important markets, and procuring additional supply both from Norway and Russia.

Throughout this period of development, the focus on sustainability was constant. When sourcing green gas, for example, it was essential to be able to verify the credentials of every prospective provider.

All this activity demanded reliable access to a constant stream of market and operational data – making the quality and consistency of IT service and support more critical than ever.

For the senior management team at GasTerra, the desire to develop according to a strictly sustainable agenda, led them to take a new look at the workplace itself.

Satisfied with the overall progress, direction and consistency achieved in IT infrastructure and application management, GasTerra and Atos were ready to start an altogether more visionary dialogue – to consider a new world of work for company employees.

New private cloud computing approaches and a common enterprise IT architecture would both play their part in the new world of work at GasTerra.

Change is Opportunity

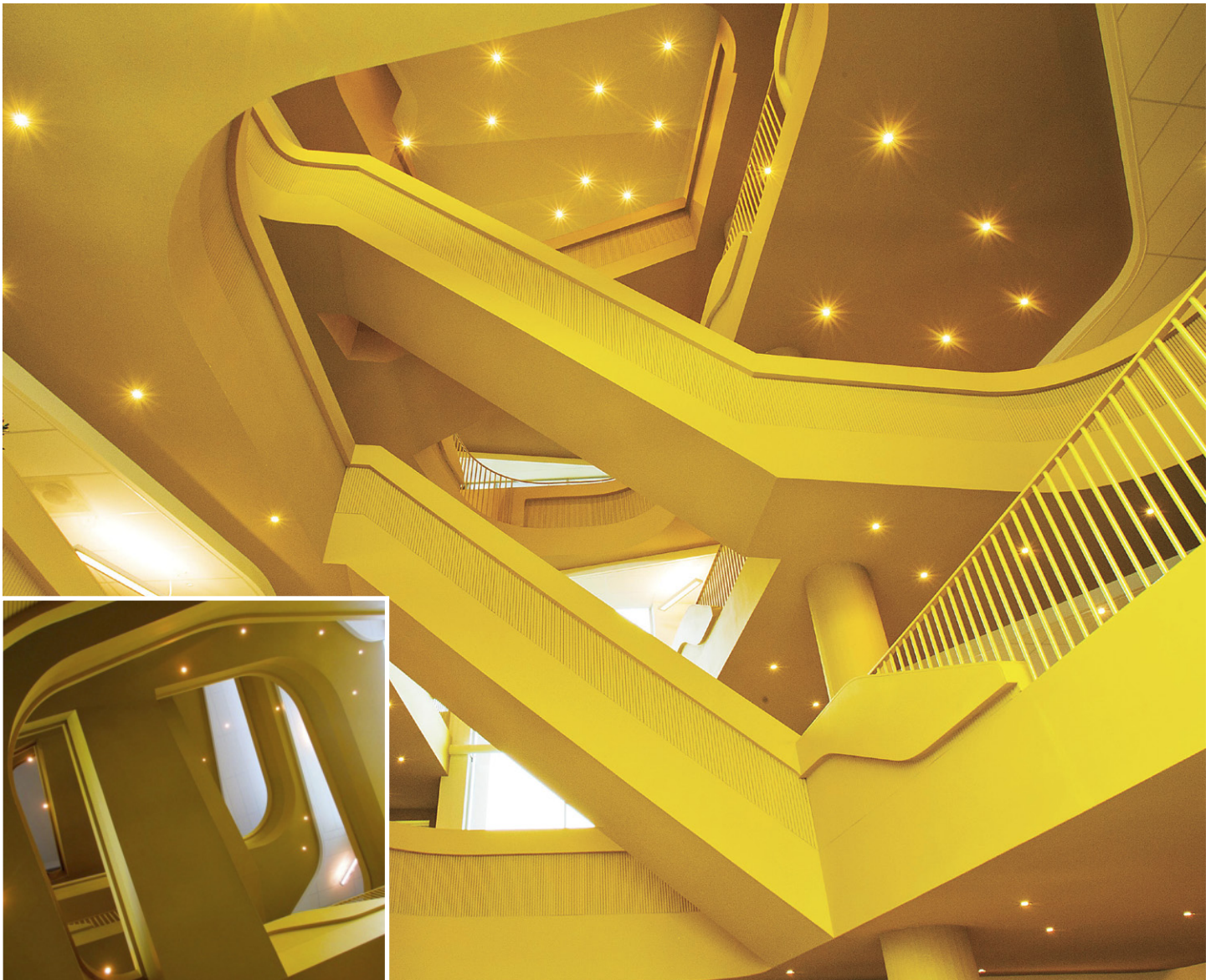
To date, the GasTerra workplace had comprised a traditional park of desktop PCs which served a workforce used to coming to the same office, the same desk and the same routine every day.

This reality was changing, and GasTerra needed an environment which changed accordingly. This was not primarily an IT discussion – indeed, Atos was heavily involved in development with people from across the company, especially from HR. The question now, was "What could the workplace be?"

In considering the form and function of the new workplace, the quality of the employee experience was pivotal and this would mean setting the highest standards for system performance and responsiveness.

This did not happen in isolation. The company was scheduled to move into a new building in Groningen, and the IT-enabled workplace would be conceived and rolled out together.

Not surprisingly, sustainability remained high on the agenda – the new building would be designed to exceptionally demanding environmental standards, and the workplace would be expected to reflect a similar level of energy efficiency. At the same time, the design of the new office space would be open and fluid, ready to actively encourage more collaborative working practices.



Sharing experience

Atos were quick to introduce GasTerra to their 'new world of work' concept, and it resonated strongly with GasTerra from the start. The Atos approach was built in large part around a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure, and would embrace all communications and collaboration technologies, all telephony services, and the specialized GasTerra trading applications.

Making the quality of the employee experience a priority, Atos paid particular attention to application performance through the virtual desktop: even the heaviest business applications would be expected to give near instant start-up, and any access to stored data resource would need to be similarly responsive.

The new GasTerra workplace was designed from the highly modular Atos Adaptive Workplace suite. "Using the Adaptive Workplace as our foundation," explains Frans Peters, "Made it possible to fast track innovation, confident that everything we proposed was built on existing Atos best practice."

Performance was exhaustively tested during design and pilot, with development and test environments established to run the heaviest workloads: GasTerra would need to be absolutely confident not only that the new workplace could be scaled up to meet changing requirement, but that the computing requirements of different professional teams could be instantly satisfied.

GasTerra was keen to experience the results before committing to the new approach, and Atos established a fully functioning virtual desktop ready for advance trial.

The new GasTerra workplace was not just about replacing one generation of technology with another. It was about a genuine and proactive change in working culture. The new working environment would see an end, for example to fixed desk and office allocation and permit more flexible working practices.

It was designed to actively promote higher than ever degrees of collaboration and also to introduce an element of unpredictability into the working culture - new working contacts lead directly to new ideas and understanding.

The management team lead by example here - CEO Gertjan Lankhorst, was the first to give up his office in preference for the new shared and flexible space.

The workplace as a strategic asset

Seen to be Green

When Atos first became involved in the strategic vision for the new GasTerra workplace, they were keen to demonstrate their own credentials. Atos itself holds GRI A+ certification, the highest level of independent assessment for sustainability.

“When we visited the Atos headquarters near Paris,” states Stähler, “our executive team experienced the Atos new world of work in the context of a physical environment built to the highest sustainability standards – and this was something we ourselves were keen to emulate. We needed to see the Adaptive Workplace in action to know that the approach was right for us.”

With a fully virtualized environment, built around VMware’s industry-leading products, GasTerra employees would have access to all functions, processes and applications needed for their work – but without being tied to either a specific device or location.

Not only did this allow GasTerra to optimize the space needed to run their business. It also gave employees greater freedom to work both on and off-site, using a combination of thin client devices, their own tablets and laptops, together with smart and softphones.

But perhaps most important of all, it has created an environment in which members of GasTerra are naturally encouraged to work with a greater degree of collaboration and creativity – in which the digital workplace actively boosts the quality of the employee’s professional life. Spontaneous rich media conferencing, for example, has become part of their new world of work.

Looking forwards

The shared experience of the last eighteen months has changed the relationship between the two companies. Before the creation of the new workplace environment in Groningen, Atos was seen primarily as a respected and reliable provider of commodity outsourced IT services.

That relationship has now shifted to a new strategic level – thanks in part to the broader discussions in which Atos is now involved. The tools people use in their work inevitably shape the way that they work together, and across the GasTerra workforce, employees recognize that their new working environment makes it possible to reach new levels of collaboration and creativity.

Delivered “as a service”, the cost model and inherent scalability have delivered clear commercial and business benefits too. Atos has, for example, deployed modular data center resources to GasTerra making it possible to simply add on instant capacity as required.

“The virtualization of our workplace,” states Stähler, “positions us for the new opportunities which lie ahead. Private Cloud delivery, for example, will become critical in ensuring our people can connect to the data and services they need with flair and confidence, and the Atos new world of work gives us a high-performance and cost-efficient foundation on which to grow.”

About Atos

Atos SE (Societas Europaea) is an international information technology services company with annual 2012 revenue of EUR 8.8 billion and 76,400 employees in 47 countries. Serving a global client base, it delivers Hi-Tech Transactional Services, Consulting & Technology Services, Systems Integration and Managed Services. With its deep technology expertise and industry knowledge, it works with clients across the following market sectors: Manufacturing, Retail & Services; Public sector, Healthcare & Transports; Financial Services; Telecoms, Media & Technology; Energy & Utilities.

Atos is focused on business technology that powers progress and helps organizations to create their firm of the future. It is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and is quoted on the NYSE Euronext Paris market. Atos operates under the brands Atos, Atos Consulting & Technology Services, Atos Worldline and Atos Worldgrid.

For more information, visit: atos.net

About GasTerra

GasTerra is an international company trading in natural gas and operates on the European energy market. GasTerra also provides related services. The company has a strong purchasing position and has more than 50 years’ experience in purchasing and selling natural gas. GasTerra is committed to sustainable development as a guiding principle for its strategy and actions. The economic value of natural gas and its importance to society as a source of energy give GasTerra an important role in utilizing Dutch gas reserves and supplying energy in the EU. GasTerra recognizes the great importance of the transition to sustainable energy supplies and has initiated various projects in connection with this.

For more information, contact: dialogue@atos.net

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