

Mainframe-as-a-Service: reliability & continuity meet cost-efficiency

When insurance company P&V had to renew their mainframe contract in 2016, they wanted to find a partner who could do more than just keep the mainframes running. The new contract would be assigned to a partner who is mainframe-centric not only ensuring continuous operations but also flexible enough to help P&V to safely migrate towards 'new technology' platforms'. Ultimately, they opted for Atos. Here's why.

The Belgian insurance company P&V, much like any other financial institution, mainly relies on mainframes for its core applications. For quite a few years, this mainframe activity had already been entrusted with a partner who provided them with the mainframe in an IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service) model.

In 2016, when they had to renew the contract however, they decided to go out and look for a partner who could also help them optimize the mainframe activity while moving an increasing amount of applications toward new, non-mainframe environments. "The reasoning behind the move away from the mainframe was very rational and economic", explained Maurice Van Caillie, IT Service Delivery Manager at P&V: "There is a growing trend of packaged applications in our industry, and these are mainly written for non-mainframe platforms. Also, the number of available mainframe experts keeps on shrinking.

It became obvious that P&V had to look for a partner with the right scale and the right skills in order to secure the continuity of the mainframe environment, not only the hardware but also the engineering support of the systems and databases.

Gradually moving away from the mainframe is therefore a common practice in the financial and insurance sector, not only in Belgium but worldwide."

Cultural fit and open communication

Meanwhile, however, P&V still needed a highly reliable mainframe partner, one who could take on mainframe-related activities, including monitoring and maintenance, while helping them migrate towards other platforms safely and reliably. The quest for this partner eventually led them towards Atos. There were several reasons for this choice, said Karel Vanwijck, Head of Service Management at P&V: "Firstly, they have always communicated very clearly and correctly on their approach. Secondly, they offered the most attractive and realistic perspective on the future of our mainframe environment. Thirdly, Atos was very constructive in finding the best possible configuration for P&V at any given moment in the migration timeline. Last, but not least: there was a very tight cultural fit between P&V and Atos: both companies are trusted organizations boasting many years of reliable partnerships and structured approach, while remaining very flexible and agile to adapt to new circumstances. This was very important to us: without a cultural fit, you shouldn't embark on such long and intensive partnerships."

The mutual flexibility came in very handy in the course of the contract, when it transpired that the initially planned migration timeline could not be maintained. "There were several setbacks in setting up the target system and in launching applications in the new environment", commented Maurice Van Caillie, "this had nothing to do with Atos, but fortunately we could rely on them to provide continuity, even when this project was intended to move away from the mainframe platform. They helped us ensure a flawless service towards our customers throughout this temporary setback."

Mainframe Cost-Efficiency.

Meanwhile, one of the objectives of the new contract has been fully realized: a predictive evolution of the TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) of the mainframe environment. This was partly due to the new type of contract: P&V no longer pays a fixed monthly fee, regardless of the usage, but their 'pay per use' contract provides them with a fairer and eventually lower invoice, due to capacity decrease and software vendors contracts optimizations.

Additionally, the mainframe environment has changed significantly as well, continued Karel Vanwijck: "Atos has inherited the mainframe configuration as it was when we left the previous contract. This was far from ideal, because the configuration wasn't optimized at all, neither for Atos nor for us. Meanwhile they have managed to move towards a configuration allowing them to manage and maintain our environment on their standard, up-to-date, fully secured platform, with their standard approach, which will, in turn lead to an even more cost-efficient result."

In the end, P&V hasn't moved away from the mainframe at the desired pace, and the mainframe remains more important than expected. But thanks to the lower price tag attached to the mainframe's TCO and given the excellent collaboration between Atos and P&V so far, the partnership can be called a success. To everybody's satisfaction, one might add, the overall customer satisfaction rate exceeds the average by far, and Atos is dubbed the #1 IT partner by P&V.



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The main brands of the group are:

- P&V Insurances: uses a network of independent insurance agents which present products in exclusivity for P&V. There are about 380 independent agents spread throughout Belgium
- VIVIUM: through this brand the products of the company are distributed throughout the classic broker channel. Unlike independent agents, brokers are free to place their portfolio of insurances within the companies of their choice.
- Actel - Affinity: Is our direct (without intermediaries) distribution channel. These activities are conducted primarily via internet or phone. Actel also provides the «affinities» channel. This is a channel mainly known by automobile manufacturers that offer also insurance needs. (eg. D'leteren, PSA, etc...).
- The P&V Group employs approximately 1,300 staff people spread across the various branches in Brussels (2 locations within a radius of 200m) and Antwerp (1 location).