SGA helps AeC swiftly and securely enable remote work for thousands of employees with Windows Virtual Desktop and reduce hardware costs by 30 percent

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Challenge: AeC needed to securely enable remote work for employees

The company needed a way to swiftly and securely allow thousands of employees to work from home.

Solution: Implementing Windows Virtual Desktop and Microsoft Azure

By partnering with SGA, AeC was able to implement a cloud-based remote work solution built on Microsoft technology.

Results: Enabling thousands of remote workers in just a few weeks

With the cloud, AeC was able to keep their services online and achieve a cost savings of 30 percent when compared with traditional desktops.

Headquartered in in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, AeC is one of the largest providers of contact center services in the nation. With more than 25,000 professionals, they support businesses across industries that include energy suppliers, telecommunications giants, and healthcare providers. For years, their office-based business model has been successful, but in early 2020, the impacts of COVID-19 resulted in AeC needing to find a way to swiftly and securely enable remote work for thousands of employees.

The company weighed their technology options. Facilitating the extension of their services to and from offsite endpoints would require a massive increase in server capacity. As global demand for server capacity rose dramatically, AeC realized they would have to either substantially increase their onsite infrastructure or adopt a cloud-based solution. After considering their options, AeC chose the cloud.

AeC evaluated each of the region's top-performing cloud providers. They considered multiple factors including cost, scalability, security, and the speed and ease of deployment. "We had a small portion of our infrastructure in Microsoft Azure already, and we've worked extensively with Microsoft in the past," says Gustavo Antonio Wanderley Teixeira, CIO at AeC. "When we saw the scalability, security, and delivery speed of Windows Virtual Desktop with Windows 10 multi-session, we knew we'd found our solution."

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Once AeC selected Microsoft Azure as their cloud of choice and Windows Virtual Desktop as their remote work solution, they began planning implementation. Rapidly establishing secure connections between their network and the home offices of more than 6,000 contact center employees would be no small task. AeC knew that they would need an experienced partner to complete this project quickly, and when they asked Microsoft for some recommendations, Microsoft suggested SGA. "Microsoft put us in contact with AeC because we are from the same city and because they knew we were a partner capable of delivering what they needed at the moment," recounts Aloísio Lacerda Júnior, CTO at SGA. "We have worked with AeC before, but this specific project was facilitated by Microsoft because it aligned so well with our expertise."

Implementing Windows Virtual Desktop to securely enable remote work

SGA was instrumental in AeC's journey to securely enable remote work. "We were their partner in delivering the complete solution on Microsoft Azure," recounts Lacerda. "They needed a remote work solution that could expand very fast because COVID-19 was forcing them to add thousands of users quickly."

SGA and AeC began the project by designing a roadmap for solution implementation. Given SGA's years of experience with the cloud as a Microsoft partner, they were able to apply Microsoft best practices to the implementation to help ensure the protection of AeC's data.

Security was top of mind for both companies as they planned for implementation. The built-in intelligent security of Windows Virtual Desktop made this easy. "Windows Virtual Desktop delivers secure access for end users because of its integration with Azure Active Directory for account sign in," notes Lacerda. "Security comes native with Microsoft Azure products—they're secure by design."

Once the roadmap was complete, the next step was to test their enhanced cloud-based infrastructure. "Before we began rolling out the solution to all of AeC's users, we first tested it with a pilot group to ensure everything was running smoothly," adds Lacerda. "It was important that we did this because Microsoft actually released an update for Windows Virtual Desktop while we were in the middle of implementation. Its new functionality was great, but we did have to make a few small adjustments due to the update—catching this in the testing phase saved us a lot of time down the road."

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Spinning up new virtual machines in Microsoft Azure to support remote workers

Following their successful pilot, SGA and Microsoft began helping AeC scale their cloud environment. In just a matter of weeks, AeC went from using 100 virtual machines to requiring more than 2,500. Because contact centers are inherently sensitive to latency—high latency causes frustrating lag on customer calls—the 2,400 new virtual machines needed to remain as local as possible. To meet this need, and with demand for Azure services skyrocketing across Brazil, Microsoft quickly moved to allocate hundreds of virtual machines to its datacenter in the south Brazil region.

This was critical because AeC serves hundreds of different corporate customers, and each customer requires its own virtual machine to ensure optimum performance, data privacy, and regulatory compliance. Additionally, each virtual machine would need to be tailored to fit the given customer's unique needs. To achieve this, AeC worked with SGA and Microsoft to quickly provision and tailor its new virtual machines to meet the needs of each customer and enable secure connections between their remote contact center employees and their onsite hardware. SGA's partnership and expertise were major factors in the speed of the deployment, and SGA continues to aid in scaling AeC's environment when the need arises.

To maximize access to this new infrastructure, SGA suggested that AeC adopt Windows 10 multi-session, which grants as many as 10 employees concurrent access to company services through the same virtual machine. The company also set up a dedicated express route for contact center voice and data, minimizing the potential for latency.

"We easily deployed in the Microsoft Azure environment," says Teixeira. "It's very simple to manage, and Windows 10 multi-session has been a powerful cost-saving solution, especially when compared to accessing a Windows environment through other cloud providers." According to Armindo Sgorlon, CEO at SGA, the cost savings were significant, "We conducted an economic study with AeC, and the Windows Virtual Desktop solution saved them over 30 percent when compared with purchasing traditional desktops."

Unlocking the benefits of a remote workforce

Teixeira says the move to remote work has had a positive effect on the quality of life for AeC contact center employees. "People have more time for their families now," he says. "They are more engaged with the company as well. We've even received comments from our corporate customers noting the improvements in our service and encouraging us to maintain this working model when the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us." The model has already proven so successful that business has actually increased during the pandemic, enabling AeC to hire nearly 2,000 new contact center employees.

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In their average workday, remote contact center employees sign in to Windows Virtual Desktop with the support of Azure Active Directory, which connects to the company's on-premises active directory and opens an IP address-specific port, granting them access to the same services and apps they used at the office. By adopting Microsoft Azure technologies, including Windows Virtual Desktop, AeC has not only adapted to unprecedented change, they have embraced a new way of working that has increased customer and employee satisfaction while simultaneously reducing operating costs.

"The word 'impossible' is not in our company vernacular," says Teixeira. "We have always embraced innovation, especially within our contact center business unit."

Looking ahead—a cloud-based future

As time goes on, AeC sees the benefits of Microsoft Azure and Widows Virtual Desktop increasing. "There are so many areas we've yet to explore in Azure," adds Teixeira. "We already plan to adopt further cloud solutions to better tailor our services to each of our customers." AeC expects that as their onsite servers reach end-of-life, their cloud infrastructure will bring easier and more cost-effective hardware refreshes. The cost savings will also extend to employee device refreshes, as these devices will no longer have to carry the burden of processor-intensive workloads.

SGA believes that anything that can be imagined can be created with Microsoft cloud technology, and this can-do attitude shows in their long-standing partnership with AeC. "The cloud is a world of new possibilities," adds Sgorlon. "AeC is a company that invests a lot in technology, and they intend to use new cloud services to further increase the functionality and security of their environment." Together, the two companies are continuing their journey of creating competitive advantage through digital transformation.

AeC has been able to increase the speed at which they deploy new customer-specific servers in the cloud. "When AeC closes a deal with a new customer, our services for them go live within 10 to 12 days, which is something we couldn't have done in the past," continues Teixeira. "Azure brought us the scalability, the deployment and provisioning speeds, the security, and the cost savings that have helped us not only adapt to COVID-19, but to chart a new course that will serve us for years to come."

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aeC Relacionamento com Responsabilidade

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