



CUSTOMER STORY



KONGSBERG

» Kongsberg Digital
Digital Transformation
at Kongsberg Digital
results in Simulation
as a Service.



Kongsberg Digital is a provider of next generation software and digital solutions to customers within maritime, oil & gas and renewables & utilities.

In addition, Kongsberg Digital is the group-wide center of digital expertise for the International Kongsberg Group. Among its products and services, Kongsberg Digital provides market-leading software-based simulators for the maritime, offshore, and naval industries. Digital Transformation is evolving its simulators to the cloud, resulting in Simulation as a Service on Microsoft Azure. The new service allows global reach to a wider customer base, with easy service provisioning, lower costs, and 'anytime anywhere' ease of use for trainees worldwide. The first pilot is nearing completion, and will yield re-usable and replicable results for the company's service provision. The ecosystem surrounding the simulators is offering attractive new opportunities for customer interaction and new business. The Digital Transformation project, carried out in collaboration with Xpirit, pushed Microsoft technologies to the edge, but with full success: the team delivered the pilot from POC to product in a little over 3 months.

Kongsberg Digital – world-wide supplier of maritime simulation solutions

Kongsberg Digital is a market leader in the domain of software-based simulators, providing state-of-the-art solutions to training institutes and private training departments in the maritime, offshore and naval industries. The solutions are used to simulate maritime navigation, engine room control or cargo operations, and are used globally by maritime academies, training institutes and operating companies in the maritime industry. The company employs more than 500 specialists with leading competence in internet of things, smart data, artificial intelligence, and automation and autonomous operations.

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Kongsberg Digital facts and figures

- » Provider of next generation software and digital solutions to customers within maritime, oil & gas and renewables & utilities.
- » Headquartered in Asker, Norway with offices worldwide.
- » Part of the international Kongsberg Group.
- » No. of employees in Kongsberg group: 6,830, whereas 500 are employed in Kongsberg Digital

Digital transformation – spearhead in Kongsberg's business

Some of Kongsberg Digital's software-based simulators have core technology codes, which date back to the early nineties and are still in use. So far, the company's engineers have been installing the simulators on-site at training institutes, which required local presence and travel time, not only for new installations, but also for maintenance and system upgrades. What's more, end-users of the simulators, i.e. trainees from maritime, naval and off-shore companies, have to travel to the training institutes, incurring a substantial amount of time and travel costs, and with training times limited to an institute's opening hours.

Tone-Merete Hansen, Senior Vice President, Maritime Simulation, Kongsberg Digital, describes the benefits of the transformation to a digital, cloud-based service portfolio: "The transformation is introducing radical change to Kongsberg Digital's business

model. This cloud-based platform is transforming our Maritime Simulation division from a product organization into a service provider. We've been selling excellent products for over 40 years, but what is changing is the delivery model. Cloud-based delivery will allow us to grow the market without the limitation of travel time for our engineer staff, and at the same time reducing costs. As a result, Kongsberg Digital can reduce its time-to-market, increase its market range and reach out to customers on a global scale, and deliver Simulation as a Service.

Digital transformation creates valuable opportunities

Tone-Merete continues: "The digital transformation is creating a wealth of opportunities. Not only for ourselves, but also for our direct customers, the training institutes. They benefit by having automatic access to the latest releases with new functionality, requiring less hardware and maintenance and, last but not least, by being able to offer an extended and more flexible training portfolio to their clients. And don't forget the trainees. The cloud-based simulator allows them to train anytime, anywhere, and besides that, we are looking into offering subscription based models as well as "pay per use" to offer flexible solutions to our customers. And because the system is easily scalable, the number of users who can train simultaneously is virtually unlimited, which, in turn, creates attractive new opportunities."

Cloud platform as ecosystem

Robin Gjessing, Kongsberg Digital's VP Technology, adds his vision: "We provide our simulator services through Kongsberg's open digital platform, Kognifai. Kognifai is creating an entire ecosystem for the maritime training industry that allows easy access to simulators and course packages and upload exercises. Kognifai is a dynamic platform that stimulates interaction between all partners involved – a marketplace and enabler for collaboration and innovation. In the past, once we had installed a simulator, there wasn't much reason for contact. Now we have a channel for regular feedback and communications about new services, which in turn presents new opportunities for business.

Interaction and close collaboration is extremely important for today's maritime industry because the industry is changing, but it isn't sure what the future will look like. The cloud-based ecosystem brings us much closer to our customers and empowers us to collaborate with the industry."

Pilot that serves as model for other cloud-based simulators

Kongsberg Digital's current simulator migration project to the cloud involves the engine room simulator (K-Sim Engine) and will serve as a POC for other simulators. The project is a pilot that was started in October 2017. Tone-Merete: "We presented our vision for the digital transition at our user conference in September last year. The response was overwhelming and several customers on boarded immediately for participating in the pilot. The K-Sim Engine pilot will be completed in April 2018, which is less than six months from the project kick-off date. Considering the positive feedback we've had so far, the pilot seems to be a success, and we will certainly use the results of the pilot in other cloud-based simulators."

Xpirit's support helped us meet challenging technological expectations

Gullik Jensen, Kongsberg Digital's Technology Director and product owner for the ecosystem: "The project was a challenge, and we knew upfront that we would be maneuvering along the edge of technological possibilities. Although we had our own team of simulation specialists, we knew we needed leading edge Microsoft Azure knowhow. In addition, we wanted to use brand-new Azure-based container technology in combination with Kubernetes. We already knew Xpirit from other projects, and had experienced their extensive knowhow at the forefront of Microsoft technology, so we asked them to advise and support our teams."

Gullik continues: "Guys like Xpirit's Roy Cornelissen and Alex de Groot have high ambitions, not only for themselves, but also for their customers. What's more, the knowledge and skill base of Xpirit's team offer a wealth of experience and in-depth knowhow that allowed us to push our limits, while remaining confident that we wouldn't tumble over the edge. In addition, Microsoft itself took part in the project, created transparency in their technologies and showed issues in GitHub."

"Xpirit's experience in project approach also contributed to our success: the combination of Scrum and DevOps ensured close collaboration between all developers located in Norway, The Netherlands and India, but also between the developers and stakeholders from our own business operations. In addition, the Minimum Viable Product approach with short iterations and fast feedback helped us to achieve excellent results within a short timeframe. We learned a lot from their approach, and they actively transferred their knowhow to us. What's more, their DevOps mindset of 'you build it, you run it' showed us how to monitor the running systems, collect feedback and improve continuously. In short, thanks to Xpirit's support, we managed to realize our goal and to create valuable opportunities." ...

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Technologies applied

» **Software development**

- » .NET and ASP.NET Core
- » SignalR
- » Entity Framework
- » Azure Web Apps
- » Azure SQL Database
- » Azure Blob Storage

» **ALM**

- » Team Foundation Server for source control, builds and releases

» **Simulator**

- » C++ Win32 code (some parts had been used for more than 25 years)
- » Containerized in a Docker for Windows image

» **Runtime services/platforms**

- » Docker on Windows (Windows Server Core)
- » Kubernetes on Azure Container Service (ACS) with a mixed cluster (both Linux and Windows)
- » Application Insights
- » Azure Container Registry



» Eneco

Eneco achieves
customer-facing
innovation.



Eneco is a supplier of electricity, gas and heating, and clearly stands out in the domain of innovation.

Stephan van Boven, Eneco's Technical lead, explains: "Energy sources will get exhausted, so people will need to be facilitated to create energy themselves. We firmly believe that you have to switch from being a service provider to being a commodity supplier. You need to anticipate prevailing trends, create an ultra-smart infrastructure, and provide state-of-the-art IT/Data driven services."

Migrating to the cloud is like creating a new foundation

In order to innovate our IT landscape, we wanted to implement a cloud-first strategy, which entails a 100% migration to the cloud. Naturally, this was no easy task, or, as Stephan van Boven puts it: "It is not like moving from one house to the other. Instead, it involves creating a new foundation. To assist us in achieving the required change, we hired Xpirit."

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"We chose Xpirit because they focus on quality and awareness, not only in terms of developing code, but also when it comes to how you should deal with software. One of their consultants was Marco Mansi – an ALM expert, cloud architect and coach. Marco helped us in making the transition to Azure and ensuring the required knowledge transfer. He is very skilled in safeguarding existing assets, and he is able to create stability in the big data team."

Stephan van Boven, Technical Lead - BigData / Azure PaaS

Customer-facing applications driven by Cloud-based data

Initially Eneco hired Xpirit to set up the technology for innovative projects such as Toon, a smart thermostat coach that uses data to issue recommendations on how to realize savings. Xpirit assisted in creating a platform for Big Data ingestion of meter readings. The data was then processed using Azure PaaS services. At the same time, Xpirit migrated Eneco's data management system to the cloud, which means that all customer information was migrated from Eneco's data center to the cloud.

In addition, Xpirit assisted Eneco in developing an application that can predict whether a boiler requires maintenance, the so-called boiler IQ, as well as a privacy system that manages all privacy-sensitive information and texts. Its data can only be used by applications after a customer's prior permission to use his data. Another project Xpirit was involved in was the Splash project. They teamed up with Eneco's architect to create the foundation for a generic order interface with an open architecture based on microservices.

Xpirit doesn't just send a consultant, you get their entire network

Xpirit also trained four Eneco trainees in topics including Continuous Delivery and Continuous Integration. "In its role as sparring partner, Xpirit provided us with thorough advice as well as a critical perspective when it comes to explaining that you can't just place a server in the Cloud," according to Stephan. "Working together with Xpirit means a lot more than just hiring a professional. You don't just get the consultant, you get his entire network. Xpirit's consultants are passionate in sharing their knowledge. They take the initiative in conducting workshops, for instance the principles of Azure control and the transition from TFS to VSTS in the Cloud. What's more, their direct lines with Microsoft's developers and product teams are extremely short and effective. They have a large number of contacts in the market, which is very valuable in this 'small' world."

"Our experience with Xpirit's professionals is very positive. The consultants are open, honest, communicative, accessible, and punctual. They're part of the team, they're committed, and they behave like true colleagues instead of seconded specialists who don't show any involvement. Xpirit's style is the basic ingredient for working together in a pleasant manner and openly discuss critical issues, and their level of expertise is extremely high and up-to-date," according to a satisfied Stephan. ...

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» ICEPAY

Scalable Cloud
architecture for
flexible growth.



21st century, cloud-scale, modern payment processing core for the largest events in the Netherlands.

ICEPAY is a Dutch Payment Service Provider offering a wide range of payment services. Security and continuity are of key importance because ICEPAY's clients – including a large number of web shops – need continuous insight into transactions and absolute certainty about their sales income. To keep up with its rapid growth and high transaction volumes, ICEPAY needed to upgrade its IT landscape to an ultra-high capacity-processing platform, with an easily scalable, cloud-based architecture. Xpirit designed an Azure- and .Net Core-based solution with containers, while the Kubernetes orchestrator ensures easy switching between cloud providers in order to avoid vendor lock-in.

ICEPAY's demanding requirements

ICEPAY processes a huge and rapidly increasing number of payment transactions, including all major debit and credit cards, Paypal, SEPA direct debits etc. Many of ICEPAY's clients are web shops who need immediate certainty about payments and insight into transactions before they fulfill their orders. Speed, continuity, security and transparency are therefore keywords in ICEPAY's exacting processing demands.

In 2016 ICEPAY decided to radically upgrade its ten-year-old IT environment – congested servers and databases were impeding the company's growth. Steven de Boer, ICEPAY's Chief Executive Officer, describes the required direction: "We operate in an evolving market with extremely rapid developments, but with low margins. In order to improve and optimize our competitive edge we needed an innovative solution based on a scalable cloud architecture. Easily expandable, ultra-reliable and highly available server capacity was of key importance. However, one thing we wanted to avoid was vendor lock-in. Although we had our own highly skilled IT team, we needed additional knowhow and experience. We talked to Microsoft, and because it was clear that Azure was the ideal platform, they advised us to team up with Xpirit."

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"We operate in an evolving market with extremely rapid developments, but with low margins"

Steven de Boer

Intelligent, state-of-the art architecture

After a couple of initial talks in which we were impressed with Xpirit's approach, level of knowhow and relevant experience, we started our journey on December 2016 with an analysis of requirements, including a cloud scan. Soon afterwards, Xpirit came up with the design for the solution, of which the first components for payment processing were deployed during the second half of 2017, while other components are still being developed.

Steven: "The core of the new .NET Core and Azure-based cloud architecture is a flexibly scalable set of containers that communicate via a service bus, providing us with unlimited server capacity. The database platform is Azure, while the Kubernetes orchestrator ensures easy switching between cloud providers. In addition to Xpirit's experience in designing the architecture, they also assisted us in designing efficient processes. A striking example is the fact that payment transaction details are processed and stored at all times, even if there's a disruption somewhere in the chain. This is something that is extremely important for our clients because their business and money simply have to keep rolling at all times."

Valuable lessons learned

Steven continues: "While the development of the solution required more effort and time than we had estimated before we started the project, we are extremely happy with the first running components. Naturally, we are continuing to team up with Xpirit, but thanks to the valuable lessons learned by our own team, we are able to perform more development work ourselves, under guidance from Xpirit's consultants." ...

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knab

» knab

Continuous
dynamics
demand
continuous
delivery.

The banking world is in a state of flux, with change driven by customers demanding app-based ways of performing financial transactions.

KNAB is at the forefront of the dynamic developments, and has teamed up with Xpirit to implement Continuous Delivery as a key enabler of dynamic product development. With success, for delivery cycles have been reduced from once every quarter to a couple of weeks and sometimes even hours. At the same time, Xpirit has helped change the mindset and attitude of development teams, thus ensuring long-term benefits.

Challenging dynamics

KNAB is amongst the trendsetters in the dynamically changing banking industry, where today's business is all about IT-driven financial services, with state-of-the-art online and mobile banking apps. Change is also driven by customers who have become demanding. They shop around, and they demand feature-rich products that are up-to-date with the market's latest app offering.

Wanda Streefkerk, Change and Release Manager at KNAB: "The new dynamics require an agile approach with fast development cycles and seamless cooperation between all teams involved – business and IT as well as our external partners. This is why we introduced an Agile and Scrum-based project approach. The approach also included Continuous Delivery, which allows extremely short cycles of programming, testing, feedback processing and deployment. With deliveries every day, sometimes even several times an hour."

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"Deliveries every day, sometimes even several times an hour..."

Wanda Streefkerk, Change and Release Manager

Continuous delivery takes more than tools – it requires a new mindset

"Continuous Delivery involves much more than merely implementing a new set of tools", Wanda emphasizes. "This is why we started looking around for an experienced partner who could assist us in driving the required change. Our situation was challenging, because our development teams work with standard products and we involve various external partners located in Iceland and Bulgaria. Because the process of Continuous Delivery requires a united approach with seamless cooperation between team members, we needed more than just technology. We also needed a new mindset and team-oriented attitude shift in which people put the team targets before their individual goals."

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"Deliveries every day, sometimes even several times an hour..."

Wanda Streefkerk, Change and Release Manager

Xpirit – a team with the right attitude

After looking around in the market we came across Xpirit, a Dutch firm of experienced consultants in the domain of IT, security and architecture in the banking industry, as well as Agile, Scrum and Continuous Delivery. Wanda explains the choice of Xpirit: "Of course their knowledge and experience were important, but it was their attitude that determined our choice. They invested in our project by spending a couple of days in our team before even mentioning any money or submitting a proposal. It was clear that their words weren't mere talk about quality, but that they walked their talk. In March 2016, Xpirit's Jesse Houwing joined our team. He offered the right combination of technical and tool knowhow and experience. In addition, he is creating consensus among all members – our KNAB teams as well as the teams of our external partners."

Sustainable value through consensus and coaching

"Consensus and close cooperation among all partners was important, even in the selection of the right tool set – Octopus. This is where Jesse's coaching skills proved to be of outstanding value. Thanks to his coaching skills, the effect of his involvement goes well beyond the immediate target of speeding up our delivery schedules. Instead of only delivering the goods, he has also brought about a long-term effect that will be of lasting value for years to come. He has managed to change our mindset, and in doing so, we received much more than we had expected or asked for. Without Jesse, we wouldn't be where we are now." ...

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» TAQA
Cloud and agile
conquer waterfall
legacy.

TAQA in The Netherlands provides the Northwestern European gas market with a huge volume of storage capacity.

Operating the storage facility involves an international trading platform on which the frequently fluctuating demands of energy suppliers are met with precision. TAQA selected Xpirit to develop a high-performance, state-of-the-art Cloud-based system to upgrade its gas storage and related trading platform. The first six weeks of the project with two pilot modules have removed TAQA's initial doubts regarding a Cloud-based solution as well as the Agile development methods. The project is now well underway and will provide TAQA with a sustainable portfolio of always-online web applications based on Microsoft's latest technologies.

TAQA's challenging environment

TAQA Gas Storage Bergermeer in The Netherlands operates Europe's largest open-access gas storage facility, and provides Northwestern European gas retailers with a huge volume of storage capacity. In order to meet its clients' requirements, TAQA guarantees security of supply, regardless of seasonal and short-term fluctuations in the demand for gas.

So far, TAQA has been facilitating its trading platform with a number of legacy systems, supplemented with spreadsheets. Most of the solutions were developed in-house, and closely met the requirements of traders and dispatchers. However, TAQA's challenging environment with rapid fluctuations in supply and demand and strict deadlines requires a stable yet flexible and scalable, always-online system that meets the needs of its users and stakeholders.

Xpirit's no-nonsense attitude

A pitch among four software suppliers resulted in Xpirit's selection. TAQA's team member Lilian van der Schrier describes why: "The guys from Xpirit were honest and direct, they understood our requirements and they proposed a solution that appeared to match our requirements. Moreover, Xpirit's small project team and transparent, non-hierarchical organization with a no-nonsense attitude appealed to us."

Transparent approach convinces TAQA's management

Lilian continues: "Our initial challenge was to convince our senior management of the benefits of the Agile, Scrum-based project approach that entails a certain degree of uncertainty. Being used to meticulous prior planning, as is customary in the case of large oil and gas plants, they were used to traditional waterfall-based, long-term project planning. However, Xpirit's transparent approach as well as a couple of pilot modules convinced them. They also saw the benefits of the short sprints with direct communication and regular alignment with stakeholders, but are looking forward to seeing actual practice-based results."

Green light for Azure-based solution

TAQA's management also hesitated against an off-premise Cloud-based solution because of its habitual belief in on-premise, in-house systems. However, Xpirit received the green light for a state-of-the-art, Microsoft-based Cloud system, not in the least because of the idea that you only pay for what you actually use and an architecture that offers flexibility in the hosting location, be it cloud or on-premises. The solution includes Docker containers with Kubernetes, Azure Platform services, .NET Core and React, plus Visual Studio 2017 and Visual Studio 2017 Team Services for scrum backlog workflow with build and release management for continuous integration and deployment.

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"Although the project is still only half-way, with a scheduled completion date in October 2018, we are already experiencing positive results with less time required from TAQA's own developers than expected. In short, these guys know their stuff, they do what they promise, and they deliver value for money."

Lilian van der Schrier

On schedule, with value for money

In addition to Xpirit's valuable technology knowhow, their project approach, including Continuous Integration and Deployment, is certainly proving its value. ...

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» Valk Solutions
VSTS radically
improves delivery
process.

Valk Solutions is reaping its first benefits: frequent releases with improved quality and transparency, by implementing VSTS.

Valk Solutions provides payment systems to a large number of retail chains, webshops and kiosks. The company's payment systems include in-store and online Point of Sale systems, often integrated with electronic ordering and stock management modules. Until the middle of 2017, the version and release management of the software involved a wide range of manual tasks. The labor-intensive, manual process stood in the way of continuous delivery of release patches. The rapid increase of Valk's customer base called for an automated version management system. Xpirit assisted in implementing VSTS, and within a matter of months, Valk Solutions is reaping its first benefits: frequent releases with improved quality and transparency, while the time involved has been reduced to nearly one tenth of what it used to be.

Drivers for change: increased customer base and outdated process

Valk Solutions' customers need regular software updates. Any interruption to payment systems has an enormous impact on their business processes. If payments can't proceed, entire transactions stop, and shoppers are likely to go elsewhere. Valk's software quality control and delivery processes are, therefore, of mission critical importance to the business of its customers.

In 2017, Valk's version management process proved to be outdated. A rapid increase in the number of customers meant that the old process couldn't keep up with customers' requirements for regular releases. A frequent succession of patches for varying implementations demanded a solution that provided transparency and minimized the time and cost of version management.

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"We needed to explain the ins and outs of version management, the risks and impediments of the old process, and I had to convince them of the benefits of the new system."

Joke Huizinga

Company needed to be convinced

In February 2017, Valk Solutions' Manager of Software Development, Joke Huizinga, called for a radical change and proposed the implementation of Visual Studio Team Services (VSTS). However, it took some tough talk to convince the company of the need for this particular change.

Joke: "We needed to explain the ins and outs of version management, the risks and impediments of the old process, and I had to convince them of the benefits of the new system. In addition, I had to push the priority because there was a lot of work for customers to be done. As I could substantiate the benefits of the required investment with a very positive cost-benefit analysis I got green light to execute."

To ensure a smooth process, Joke Huizinga involved Xpirit's consultant Jasper Gilhuis. "It was an easy choice. We needed extra expertise and I knew Jasper from a previous project,

I knew his know-how, experience and skills, and what's more, I had seen him in action in the past, convincing hi-tech experts and nerds. He has a great deal of charisma that gets people moving to achieve results in a minimum of time. And that's what happened. Within a matter of months, VSTS had been implemented with the old version database migrated into the new system."

A simple press of a button

Bart van Dodeweerd, Valk Solutions' Lead Developer, describes the change: "The process of version and release management used to involve a tedious, time-consuming process that was carried out by one person. The entire process took approximately eight hours, with activities that usually had to be carried out during evenings or weekends when shops were closed. What's more, being a manual process, it was unacceptably error-prone. Now, this process has been reduced to a mere press of a button, taking about one tenth of the time it used to take. A year ago, we simply deemed this to be impossible."

Why didn't we take this step years ago?

Bart continues: "The version management process has become much more efficient. Within a matter of months, we were able to deliver our releases more frequently. The software is more stable, and more frequent releases reduce the scope of possible problems. If a problem does occur, we resolve it much faster. Moreover, we have immediate insight into which customer is using which version, we can track the status, and our quality control has improved enormously. It's amazing where we are now, and I am glad that we met Joke and Jasper and that we got the company's funding to take this step."

"We're currently in the process of adding release management, which will be followed by adding databases and back-end systems. The change to VSTS has radically improved our entire delivery process, resulting in higher quality and more transparency while reducing the costs." ...

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» Van Lanschot
Transforming into
an Omnichannel
Wealth Manager.

Dutch private bank Van Lanschot is facing changing client needs and rapid changes in the market.

To adapt to those needs, they've worked with Microsoft Partner Xpirit to migrate their internal & public facing web & mobile apps to a Sitecore-driven omnichannel platform on Azure. By leveraging modern techniques such as DevOps, Infrastructure as Code and many Azure PaaS offerings, the bank has obtained the ability to deliver best in class competing products.

Founded in 1737, Van Lanschot is the oldest independent bank of the Netherlands. It is part of Van Lanschot Kempen, a specialized wealth management firm that serves private and institutional clients. In addition, the bank offers advanced asset management and merchant banking services to the business-to-business segment. While the demand for dedicated service of the highest quality has always remained the same, the underlying wealth management market has evolved into a global 24/7 market. At the same time, clients have a growing need for sophisticated advice and easy-to-use (self-) service, while still valuing their personal touchpoints.

Two-speed architecture implementation by Xpirit

To facilitate its business needs, Van Lanschot developed an omnichannel strategy, combined with Microsoft Azure cloud as a strategic enabler for its digital transformation. In addition, the bank has developed a two-speed architecture which ensures that back-office systems can develop at a sustainable pace, while business teams can accelerate speed as demanded by rapidly changing requirements. It also ensures a scalable front-end while keeping the back-end stable and secure.

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"We started with a vision of the desired situation over a period of a few years, but the challenge is how to actually achieve this. Xpirit guided us to deliver an Azure-based development environment within three months. By collaborating closely with all parties involved, roughly five months after the initiation of the project, the first applications made their way to production."

David Versteeg, Director Digital & Innovation at Van Lanschot

Next wave of banking products

David continues: "One year down the line, we do not regret any of the choices we have made so far. The digital platform offers a full 360-degree view, combining all touchpoints, client interactions and client portfolios. By leveraging the cloud in all its aspects, we are now able to combine data-driven intelligence with personal attention, which results in tailor-made advice that is delivered to the client in person or through the most compelling mobile and web experience."

The digital platform consists of Visual Studio Team Services for orchestrating Continuous Delivery. Sitecore Experience Platform 8.2 was chosen for the delivery of marketing and omnichannel capabilities, and Azure API Management is used to facilitate the two-speed architecture. In addition, a combination of App Gateway and App Service Environment ensures optimal scalability while dealing with the complex bank-specific regulations.

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"Because a cloud-based development platform was a totally new environment for us, this project was an exciting adventure. Thanks to Xpirit's guidance, the project was a tremendous success. We wouldn't have achieved what we have today if we'd have had to do all this ourselves."

David Versteeg

DevOps platform for continuous product innovation

To allow Van Lanschot's business to continuously innovate products and business models, multi-disciplinary DevOps-teams were on-boarded on the platform, consisting of Van Lanschot employees assisted by two dedicated Xpirit consultants. Xpirit implemented Visual Studio Team Services as the central DevOps platform, allowing all teams to work together on one platform. Not only does it deliver collaboration tools, transparent work item tracking and code quality control, it is also the foundation of Van Lanschot's Infrastructure and Application landscape automation. Build and Release Management is used to enforce Continuous Delivery in every aspect of the Digital Platform. ...

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» Greenchoice
Sustainable
IT environment
for responsible,
rapid growth.



Greenchoice is one of the largest suppliers of sustainable energy in The Netherlands.

Success in the market has led to the company's rapid growth, partly due to new, IT-driven services being introduced on a regular basis. A steadily growing number of applications imposed the need to professionalize the IT department: a well-structured architecture was required, testing needed to be automated, and change and release management had to be optimized. Xpirit assisted Greenchoice in realizing the required changes, and with full success: the IT landscape has become much more stable and efficient, and has grown into a solid foundation that supports responsible growth.

Greenchoice: sustainability means practicing what you preach

Greenchoice was founded in 2001, and was one of the first providers of sustainable energy on the Dutch market.

The company strongly believes in the adagio: practice what you preach, which is why it has implemented sustainability throughout its organization. For instance, staff is encouraged to travel only by public transport, the company only invests in natural energy and conservation, and it participates in talks with government bodies about implementing the Paris climate agreement.

Due to its rapid growth, Greenchoice's IT department, which had grown from its original size of 7 to a team of 50, also needed to be made more sustainable. The department's Team leader, Alex Janssen, describes the need for change: "Lack of a stable underlying architecture and inefficient use of servers, with essential information only residing in the heads of key staff, had caused the IT landscape to be vulnerable, leading to inefficiencies. Moreover, releasing new versions of applications took far too much time, we didn't have proper tooling for our change management, and testing required too much manual effort. In short: we needed to professionalize and become more sustainable."

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"Their extensive Microsoft knowhow and experience offered exactly what we needed."

Alex Janssen

Xpirit helps create a stable and efficient environment

Alex continues: "To realize the required changes, we needed support from experienced professionals, so we called upon Xpirit. Their extensive Microsoft knowhow and experience offered exactly what we needed, and they set to work in late 2015. Divided over a number of separate projects, they helped us set up a proper DTAP environment and they defined a proper architecture. This also included the management of the server infrastructure with configuration as code by means of Powershell DSC. As a result of new modules, professionalizing our testing activities and involving highly skilled new staff, the percentage of bugs has practically been halved and variation in applications has been reduced substantially. Needless to say, the environment has become much more stable, efficient and easy to manage."

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"What struck us in particular was Xpirit's approach to making their knowhow available and accessible. Their consultants constantly pick each other's brains, which means you get to benefit from the best practices of their entire team. This is something you rarely see in the market. To me this was a clear case of practicing the professionalism they preach!"

Substantial time savings and solid foundation for the future

At the same time, Xpirit helped Greenchoice to optimize the release process of its applications. Alex: "They implemented TFS release management, and this proved extremely successful: due to variations in applications and inefficient server organization, a new release used to take up to two hours per application. With sixteen applications and regular new releases, this used to take a full day for two persons. And now? An average of one and a half hours for the entire landscape!. As a result of Xpirit's work, everything works efficiently, it has become transparent, and we know how everything works. A great improvement that has provided us with a solid foundation for continuous delivery of end-user value."

You don't just get a single consultant – you get their entire team!

Alex: "What struck us in particular was Xpirit's approach to making their knowhow available and accessible. Their consultants constantly pick each other's brains, which means you get to benefit from the best practices of their entire team. But what's more, they organized one of their weekly tech nights on site at our premises. They came with the works: pizzas, drinks and ... their entire team. They all shared a wealth of knowhow with our staff, and this is something you rarely see in the market. To me this was a clear case of practicing the professionalism they preach!" ...

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raet

» RAET

Smooth migration
to the cloud with
zero downtime.

RAET is a leading international Human Resource and Payroll solutions provider in The Netherlands, Spain and Latin America.

In 2017, RAET decided to migrate from Team Foundation Server 2012 to Visual Studio Team Service (VSTS). The benefits of the migration to VSTS were substantial: extensive new functionality as well as the convenience of the 3-weekly updates with the most recent tools and features. Smooth migration without any downtime was of critical importance to the continuity of the work of the company's 250 developers. The migration itself was performed in a single weekend. Xpirit's relevant experience, combined with thorough preparation and communications, contributed to a successful project: on the Monday following the migration, all development teams could continue their work without losing a single instant of productivity.

Efficient tooling essential for productivity

RAET's scrum teams are continuously developing new versions of the company's solutions for Human Resource and Payroll service providers. Efficient tooling is of crucial importance to the teams' productivity. Until the middle of 2017, RAET was using the on-premise 2012 version of Team Foundation Server to support the development process. RAET's teams were very eager to upgrade, but until the beginning of 2017 Microsoft only offered a high-risk migration path that involved a lot of steps. After Microsoft offered a high-fidelity migration path from TFS 2012 to VSTS, the company started planning the migration to the cloud. The benefits of the efficiency and convenience of the cloud-based solution were clear: automatic availability of the latest upgrades, as well as a move from the company's own servers, which would remove the need for RAET's own maintenance.

Innovate or die

Gerald Murre, Program Director at RAET, explains: "The migration was extremely important for us, in terms of the new functionality for managing requirements, analysis and reporting, but also because of the convenience of the cloud. It's a matter of innovate or die. Older versions mean you're not using the best tooling in terms of your productivity. But your recruitment also becomes difficult. Today's specialists are choosy, and they don't want to work with old tooling."

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"Migration is something you do only once. To get it right the first time, you need someone who's done it before."

Frits Boers, RAET's Development Manager

Xpirit's experience instilled confidence

One of RAET's concerns was the possibility of downtime after the migration: any interruption to the work of its 250 developers would mean a considerable loss. To ensure a smooth migration, RAET chose to involve Xpirit, a consultant with relevant experience.

Frits Boers, RAET's Development Manager, describes the choice of Xpirit: "Migration is something you do only once. To get it right the first time, you need someone who's done it before. There are plenty of consultants around, but there's not many like Xpirit. Their level of Microsoft technology knowhow is extremely high, and their experience gives you the confidence that they can and will deliver what they promise. Moreover, we only had 13 weeks to prepare and carry out the migration. Xpirit's Sander Aernout's experience was essential in ensuring that everything was prepared meticulously, resulting in a flawless migration."

Communication of crucial importance

Gerald Murre adds: "To minimize the risk for any issue, we intentionally kept the scope as small as possible. For example, we chose to first migrate the TFS App Tier and to migrate to the new build system later. In addition to the thorough preparations, we paid a lot of attention to risk management and communications with our developers. Xpirit assisted us in preparing presentations and workshops to our teams located in The Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and India. Everyone was aware of what was happening during the migration weekend, and teams were well prepared. Without this communication, I'm sure we would have run into problems."

Flawless migration with zero downtime

Frits Boers continues: "Although we were fully confident that the migration was well prepared, we were excited and curious about the outcome. However, on the Monday morning following the migration, everyone could resume his work, without a minute of downtime! And as it turned out six weeks later, migrating to the Cloud was a life-saver. Our old TFS server went down, and if it hadn't been for the migration, we would have lost a huge amount of work, time and money." ...

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