Retailer Oh'Green boosts flexibility and customer satisfaction by migrating legacy systems to the cloud

Combining legacy systems and on-premises servers across three merged companies, Oh'Green is future-proofing its IT with a consistent environment while taking advantage of the flexibility the cloud affords.

oh'green

Customer

Oh'Green

Website: www.ohgreen.be
Country: Belgium
Industry: Retail
Company size: 500 employees

Customer profile

Oh'Green is a retailer with 12 garden and home decoration stores in Belgium.

Software and services

Microsoft Azure IaaS
Office 365

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Koen Grauls, Business Process & IT Manager at Oh'Green

Oh'Green views sustainability and beauty as two of its core values, connected together and a way of life. The newly founded company assembles a huge range of plants and flowers for indoor and outdoor decoration, fresh cut flowers and bouquets, and more. Each store is also a garden center, where customers can get advice, décor ideas, and inspiration from experts.

Oh'Green was created through the recent merger of three garden center businesses: Walter Van Gastel, Oh!Green Group and Intratuin. The new organization has 12 stores operating in Belgium. Previously, the company had three independent, legacy on-premises IT environments, making it difficult to connect the organization's data and systems. The company wanted to update and centralize its data and systems while ensuring full business continuity. Flexibility and the ability to scale quickly were also key requirements, because Oh'Green wanted to future-proof its new platform, without knowing what capacity they'd need in the months ahead. Oh'Green decided to keep the internal IT cost to a minimum and outsource as much as possible and, due to the merging of multiple organizations, needed to move to a common platform, with SAP chosen as the ERP system for the overall company.

As SAP was critical to the success of the new company, Oh'Green chose to work with Microsoft Partner oXya, A Hitachi Group Company, a specialist in maintaining SAP environments, keeping them up and running independent of the underlying infrastructure. oXya's offering of an SLA and service guarantee on top of Azure helped make the decision even easier. Additionally, the company decided to take advantage of the cloud's speed and flexibility by moving its data to Microsoft Azure Infrastructure as a Service and deploying Office 365.

"The main reason we chose Azure over other solutions was because it offered us the flexibility and scalability we needed, especially since we didn't know upfront what size of solution we would need in the coming years," says Koen Grauls, Business Process & IT Manager at Oh'Green.

Migrating while maintaining business continuity

The starting point for Oh'Green's move to the cloud was its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). The company wanted to continue with its SAP environment and achieve the flexibility to scale up cost-effectively when needed, so it worked with oXya's subsidiary in Benelux to move to Azure's IaaS platform with SAP on HANA.

Working with oXya, Oh'Green migrated its SAP ECC environment to Azure, running on SUSE Linux. This included a database migration to HANA, with development, test, acceptance and production systems all included within the environment. The company also upgraded its ECC environment to the latest version, with the three merging companies on a tight timeframe to complete the migration before the opening of a brand new Oh'Green concept store in March 2018, in Aarschot, Belgium.

oXya met that goal, completing the migration in just four months, without system downtime. *"It was crucial we had our business continuity during the migration and it went really well. We had no issues at all,"* Koen says.

Continuity and maintaining availability are important to Oh'Green for the long haul, and not just peak times. The company's busiest times of the year include Spring, Christmas, Black Friday, and weekends during high season. As the company expands, it wants to be able to grow without worrying about system downtime. Koen notes, *"We're talking long-term flexibility and scalability, in the context of our ambition to grow and to become the number one garden and home decoration center in the country."*

The move to an IaaS model also allows Oh'Green to be more efficient from an IT operations standpoint. Koen says, *"We didn't have to invest in a huge infrastructure and IT staff. With Azure, we can adjust as we grow, which is a big advantage for our company at this stage."*

Empowering employees with Azure and Office 365

Before merging to become Oh'Green, the three businesses had been using Microsoft Office. With the formation of the new company and the move to Azure, it decided to deploy Office 365. In the past, employees were using slower, disparate systems for tasks such as creating store reports. After the upgrade, users benefit from a BI solution that allows them to run queries on real-time information, with a SAP HANA database in Azure. End users access that data using an Excel add-in called Analysis for Office, combining the power of the BI tool with all the functionalities of Excel.

"This tool is still new for most people in the organization," says Koen. *"As user experience grows, it will be the basis for improving the quality of several processes."*

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Microsoft

Microsoft

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Currently, the most popular reports are based on turnover comparison between years, the number of customers and average spend. Other processes will also be enhanced, including negotiations with suppliers and the follow-up of agreed conditions.

"Users in more operational roles, who aren't required to spend time on analysis, now receive standard reports with the latest refreshed information," says Koen.

Elsewhere, Oh'Green is enhancing internal communication with what it calls 'Communications Sites' in SharePoint. These sites will become the backbone of communication at head office and in stores, and will be rolled out gradually to help end-users discover the possibilities available. *"As it is all quite intuitive, all it takes is a few enthusiastic colleagues in every department,"* notes Koen.

The company is also making use of Microsoft Teams in Office 365 for project work and collaboration.

"Teams offers great flexibility in bringing together groups of people, either for a temporary reason like a project, or for a longer-term collaboration between members of the same department or team," says Koen. *"Using Teams, we can easily share documents within the relevant group and also with people outside our organization. You are always in touch with your colleagues using the chat functionality, and many of us have started to use the mobile version on our smartphones."*

Quickly integrating new features such as these is just the beginning for Oh'Green, which has embarked on several new ways of working since the move to Azure. Taking an experimental approach, Koen is excited about the possibilities and enjoys the fact that a short presentation, demo or workshop is all that's required to introduce new functionality to employees.

"Everything is easier when you're on a centralized platform. Standardizing our shops was the most important thing to do, and it was extremely fast," says Koen. *"There have been many benefits to our move to the cloud on Azure."*

Partner:
oXya, A Hitachi Group Company

Partner website:
www.oxya.com

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