Credit Union Enables Timely Work-From-Home
With Azure Virtual Desktop

Challenges

Like many firms in 2020, a regional Credit Union, which delivers financial services to its members in their local communities, needed to provide secure work-from-home capabilities to its back-office employees. The firm had a legacy virtual desktop solution in place, but it had limitations in terms of access, security and scalability.

Increasingly, members of credit unions interact with their financial institution online and via the phone, utilizing various services from information gathering, to conducting transactions, to submitting inquiries. It is the responsibility of the back-office employees to deliver timely and secure financial services to the credit union's customers.

But with the immediate shift of its back-office employees to work-from-home during the pandemic, the firm needed to provide its employees with workspaces that they could expect the same seamless experience as they had working from their physical desktops, while not sacrificing the level of service that they provided to their customers.

The credit union had been using an on-premises virtual desktop solution via virtual private network (VPN). Although the data was centralized and it offered users flexibility to work-from-home, the platform did not offer high-performance to end-users. It also created greater complexity for the IT department to update and maintain workstations and protect against potential exposure of data breaches.

The key goals of the new virtual desktop solution included:

- Enabling productivity, ensuring that the users could work locally with access to all their applications
- Greater protection, going beyond alignment to financial compliance standards, and protecting files and data from accidental or malicious access
- Reduction of the cost and complexity of maintaining its on-premises data center, with flexibility to scale

"With a focus on implementing, connecting, and securing, scalable infrastructures on premise and in the cloud, Vandis has built its Azure practice to optimize the Azure Virtual Desktop experience while bringing together best practices of well-architected Azure environments."

Ryan Young, CTO, Vandis

Industry
Financial Institution

Location
New York Headquarters with approximately 20 branches

Technology Solution
Virtual Desktop Infrastructure

Partners
Microsoft

Products
Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop
Vandis' Azure Virtual Desktop Quick Start

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Solution

Already a trusted advisor, previously providing on-premises IT security solutions to the firm, the Credit Union engaged with Vandis to implement a secure virtual desktop solution and a path to secure hybrid cloud services. Vandis engineers suggested Azure Virtual Desktop (previously Windows Virtual Desktop) which provided cloud-based access to critical business applications.

Vandis implemented the Azure Virtual Network to allow the VMs to communicate privately with each other and with the internet. Vandis also connected Azure Virtual Desktop host pools to an Active Directory (AD) domain and configured the network to access virtual desktops and virtual apps, based on the firm's policies. Azure AD provided identity and access management by applying security features like conditional access, multi-factor authentication, and the Intelligent Security Graph, to help maintain app compatibility in domain-joined VMs. Azure Virtual Desktop was connected to the on-premises network using a VPN.

Vandis, a Microsoft Gold Partner with an Advanced Specialization in Azure Virtual Desktop, also provides managed services and support to IT users for fast resolutions to challenges.

Results

By introducing Azure Virtual Desktop, the Credit Union has implemented a stable, modern, and scalable solution for users to access their applications from anywhere and on any device. For the user, the experience is seamless, because Windows 10 feels like a normal desktop experience.

Vandis deployed this working platform in under a week, using its turnkey quick start solution. The Vandis Azure Virtual Desktop Quick Start creates the images and optimizes the processes to build a secure environment that can scale to changing needs. The project was initially rolled out to 40 back-office users and ran in parallel with the legacy VDI solution. The quick deployment enabled users with the remote access that they needed, while providing uninterrupted support services to end customers. As a result of this successful roll-out, the project has been expanded to be rolled-out to all 200 back-office users, including its call center.

As part of the project, 10 virtual machines were built, with 2 running for quick access. The Azure Virtual Desktop environment has been optimized to scale in and out with changing demand, scaling in nights and weekends with low demand, saving unnecessary spend on cloud costs, or expanding out for increased user connections during higher demand. Conversely, with the legacy virtual desktop environment, all 200 virtual desktops are running all the time.

Although the Credit Union was not initially seeking migration of its IT infrastructure to the cloud, by implementing an Azure Cloud solution, the Credit Union gained the flexibility to scale IT resources up and down with demand and quickly provision new applications and increase the reliability of the underlying infrastructure. As a result, the Credit Union is positioned to achieve benefits such as reducing maintenance costs of its on-premises data center, saving money on hardware costs, and gaining real-time business insights. The security posture has also been improved, with a more secure integrated environment for remote access to the infrastructure.