



How Saab Group created a digital workplace that's flexible yet secure

Client name: Saab Group

Location: Stockholm, Sweden

Industry: Aerospace & Defense

Challenge

- Saab Group needed to connect employees and partners in some 100 countries, yet still comply with hundreds of security requirements worldwide
- Flexibility and mobility were both essential
- New collaborative possibilities were needed

Solution

- Create an intelligent digital workspace with help from DXC
- Employ virtual desktops to enhance security and control
- Employ security protections at the individual-user level

Results

- Easy updates, thanks to virtual desktop setup
- Cost savings estimated at \$4 million per year
- Security greatly enhanced, empowering collaboration with suppliers and other partners

How do you open your enterprise network to employees in more than 100 locations around the world, while also maintaining security and authorization control down to the individual-employee level?

If you're Saab Group, you do it by working with DXC Technology and Citrix to create an intelligent digital workspace.

Saab, a \$3.57 billion provider of military defense and civil security products, services and solutions, recently deployed this digital workspace for all 16,000 of its employees. What's unusual at Saab is that many of its employees work not from the company's Stockholm headquarters, but remotely in offices that are small, yet close to customers.

"We sell a lot of high-end products to a customer list in more than 100 countries, yet we don't have experts in all those countries for all products," explains Saab Group's chief information officer (CIO), Mats Hultin. "So we needed a global, secure and safe collaborative platform."

Building a digital workplace that's both extremely open yet also extremely secure is a bit like trying to grow an apple with feathers — the two don't normally go together. Yet for Saab Group, achieving this unusual combination is essential.

The company's customers include the defense organizations of some of the world's largest countries. They rely on Saab for products and services, including missile systems, radar and electronic warfare, and training/simulation systems — often developed and supplied on a confidential basis. "We work every day with classified information, so we need to be very open at one end and very closed at the other end," Hultin says. "That's the key for us — to balance security and agility."

Long-term partners

Development of Saab's digital workspace has been in the works since 2014, when DXC (then CSC) conducted some of the first pilots. The two companies have a longstanding work relationship dating back to 2000.

The intelligent digital workplace, fully rolled out to all Saab Group employees in late 2018, is based on DXC's Workplace and Mobility solutions, yet run by Saab on its own premises. DXC co-developed and supplied the unified communications components of the solution, which includes Skype, SharePoint, email and conferencing. It also worked with Citrix to provide Saab with mobile device management. Another important component is the DXC Service Desk, which supports Saab's users, and the company also provides ongoing support and management for the solutions and services.

The digital workplace enables Saab employees to access the company's data, software tools and applications from virtual desktops and mobile devices from anywhere in the world. But the system also lets Saab managers determine who has access to which resources. "Across our many customers, we have several hundred security requirements," CIO Hultin says. "So even to install a local printer, you need to have a security clearance that's run through our help desk and service portal."

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— Mats Hultin, group CIO,
Saab Group

Suppliers and other business partners are able to use the intelligent digital workplace, too. The use of virtual desktops means Saab can define workspaces for each partner and restrict the partner to that workspace. Similarly, truly secret information is not available on the digital workplace at all, but is instead isolated on systems that have no connections to the public internet. “Saab was early to the market, and they really foresaw the situation,” says Christer Nordberg, a DXC account general manager who works closely with Saab. “Now they’re enjoying a fast time to market with help from their partners.”

Mobile phones presented Saab and DXC with some special security challenges. “We generally regard mobile phones as very unsecure devices,” Hultin says. The solution: use Citrix technology to create a “sandbox,” a virtual safe space, where a small number of corporate applications can be offered to mobile phone users.

That, in turn, created another challenge. For security reasons, Saab does not allow its sandboxed mobile apps to use the phone’s microphone. But that’s required by Skype, another app Saab needed. The technical challenge was eventually solved in a way that allows Saab users to call with Skype while maintaining high levels of security.

Easier updates

Another benefit of using virtual desktops is that Saab’s security patches and software updates are made centrally, and just once, rather than locally and thousands of times. For example, a recent upgrade of one group’s PCs to Windows 10 took less than 25 minutes, Hultin says. “Because everything runs in the servers, it just downloads to the PC or client directly,” he adds. “When we moved to Windows 10, it was just a normal update, almost as easy as adding a patch.”

Similarly, when Saab recently acquired a company, the virtual-desktop approach meant all 700 employees of the acquired company could be shifted onto the network in just 2 days. All they needed was strong user authentication and access to the virtual platform.

Now that the intelligent digital workplace has been fully deployed, Saab and DXC are working on future enhancements. One possibility being explored is allowing different business groups within Saab to customize the system for their specific needs. Other enhancements could come from the introduction of chatbots, artificial intelligence-powered automation, and components of DXC Bionix, the company’s digital delivery platform.

And while cost-reduction was not a primary goal of the project, the intelligent digital workspace helps Saab save money. CIO Hultin estimates he’s lowered his per-user costs by 15 percent, saving Saab approximately \$4 million a year. “Yet that’s the smallest of all the benefits,” he adds. “It’s really about flexibility and change, productivity and onboarding partners. Those are gains we can’t always measure, but they’re huge.”

About DXC Technology

As the world’s leading independent, end-to-end IT services company, DXC Technology (NYSE: DXC) leads digital transformations for clients by modernizing and integrating their mainstream IT, and by deploying digital solutions at scale to produce better business outcomes. The company’s technology independence, global talent, and extensive partner network enable 6,000 private and public-sector clients in 70 countries to thrive on change. DXC is a recognized leader in corporate responsibility. For more information, visit www.dxc.technology and explore thrive.dxc.technology, DXC’s digital destination for changemakers and innovators.

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