

CASE STUDY

Autopolis unveils its new Microsoft 365 environment in Telindus' hybrid cloud



Selected at the end of 2019, Autopolis's new collaboration and communication environment became operational at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic forced companies to urgently find new ways of operating. Marc Devillet, General Manager of Autopolis, and Luis Trindade, IT Manager, testify to how their company leveraged the new tools deployed by Telindus to strengthen its resilience, increase its agility, and accelerate its transformation.

A CLEAR CHOICE

"Our needs were manifold," explains Luis Trindade. "Every October, we present to the Autopolis management our projects and budgets for the following fiscal year. For the year 2020, we envisioned different projects that were all interconnected."

"The first issue we wanted to address was the management of our email system mailboxes, which had become truly time-consuming." The Autopolis IT team had to allocate additional storage space to its email system almost every month to cope with the growing number of users and the continuous increase in mailbox sizes.

"We also wanted to better manage our Microsoft Office licenses and, most importantly, equip ourselves with a modern collaboration tool similar to our automotive manufacturer partners who were already using video conferencing tools," he adds. "Given these needs, the decision to transition to Microsoft 365 seemed obvious to us, and we presented it to the management."



CHALLENGES TO OVERCOM

"We did, however, face several challenges," nuances Autopolis' IT Manager. Prior to the migration, Autopolis needed to transition its entire IT infrastructure to Windows 10. However, things quickly became more complicated: "We encountered issues with the supply of IT hardware," he recounts. "And at the same time, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out."

Faced with the urgency of the situation, the company quickly activated its hosting in Telindus' U-flex 3.0 cloud environment. "At the same time," says Luis Trindade, "we began migrating our mailboxes and upgrading our IT infrastructure. And all of this, sometimes remotely, sometimes on-site. In parallel, we had to implement teleworking solutions for our employees."

HYBRID CLOUD

"For several years, our infrastructure has been hosted in a private cloud," recalls the IT Manager. "It seemed entirely natural for us to move towards a hybrid cloud solution to transition to the public cloud with peace of mind." Once again, Microsoft 365 proved to be a wise choice, especially since the IT team needed to migrate its entire MS Exchange messaging system and have a toolbox to rely on to implement projects.

AN OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CRISIS

"We created a Teams environment right at the beginning of the lockdown, which allowed us to facilitate and streamline internal communication," recounts Luis Trindade. Today, hosting the new environment in Telindus' hybrid cloud is fully operational, and the mailbox migration is complete. "We are still in a learning phase," he emphasizes, "but we use Microsoft 365 tools daily, including Teams for communication and collaboration, as well as the Stream video service for creating multimedia content and user training."

CASE STUDY

Marc Devillet, CEO of Autopolis,
"Our company has become more digital and agile."



The completion of the deployment of your new Office 365 environment coincided with the early weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic. How did these new tools enable you to ensure the continuity of your operations?

"The change in model was as rapid as it was fundamental. In 2 or 3 days, we had to transition from an organization based on a traditional mode of communication - resulting in meetings sometimes pushed to the point of overkill, as in many companies, and emails flying left and right - to a decentralized system - with everyone confined to their homes - and digital communication. Teams allowed us to continue communicating without interruption and to implement all the necessary measures to keep the business running smoothly."

Did these tools enable you to implement alternative strategies to continue interacting with your clients?

"The sales team benefited greatly from the Microsoft 365 applications and particularly from Teams. For several years, Autopolis has implemented a true digital strategy and our clients continued to contact us, whether through our website or via our social media accounts.

"But these inquiries then needed to be addressed. Thanks to Teams, our sales representatives were able to share offers, documentation, and various information about vehicles with our clients. They even took it a step further by presenting, through our new communication tools, the strong points of our vehicles, and despite all the difficulties related to the pandemic, they managed to create value, that is, to make sales."

How was this change integrated by the different users?

"By necessity, the change had to be integrated abruptly, overnight. However, I noticed that the transition was quick, especially for the salespeople and managers who immediately embraced the new tools."

"Now, the time has come for us to delve deeper. For this, we have implemented a training plan aimed at improving our employees' skills in the face of the new environment and allowing them to properly assimilate the strategy underlying this transformation, all of which is, of course, fundamentally different from what we have experienced before."

How does a collaboration platform like Teams integrate into your day-to-day activities? What improvements does it bring to your internal communication?

"I'll answer this question with a concrete example. Before the health crisis, the 20 managers at Autopolis would gather every morning in my office for updates. This meeting was used to communicate information and give directives. It also allowed the different teams to stay informed about what was happening in other departments."

"Autopolis is indeed a multi-brand organization driven by different teams, which is challenging to manage, especially in terms of communication. So, we wondered how to maintain this meeting under the exceptional conditions we were facing."

"The solution came very simply. We now hold a virtual meeting through Teams three times a week, during which we share events, facts, sales volumes, and issues encountered. One of the advantages of this digital solution is that employees who are on the move can also join the meeting and actively participate."

Your new collaboration and communication environment is hosted in Telindus' hybrid cloud. Autopolis' IT infrastructure management is also handled by Telindus. What benefits do you derive from this?

"It's been over five years since we started our partnership with Telindus. Several reasons guided our approach. First and foremost, it was essential for Autopolis to move its IT infrastructure out of its premises, especially for security reasons. As current events continually demonstrate, data security has become a vital concern for businesses. Relying solely on our own resources, it would have been difficult to invest in the specialized skills needed to secure our systems adequately."

"Another factor that guided our decision is that we wanted an IT infrastructure tailored to the needs of our business. The value of these technologies lies in creating solutions specific to our activities, applications, and tools that effectively meet the needs of our technicians and employees. By delegating the responsibility for managing our IT operations to Telindus, we have gained a lot in terms of availability, stability, and security, but our company has also become more digital and agile."

"To measure the progress made, it's important to remember that five years ago, we only had one computer per workshop. Today, each of our 63 mechanics has a PC."

What is your perception of the role played by information technology and digitalization in your sector?

"The question of automation and digitalization in mobility is clearly central. That's where the real challenge lies."

"Vehicles are becoming increasingly connected, and in this field, the speed of data transmission brought by 5G is expected to play a crucial role. Tomorrow, a vehicle will not only be constantly connected to its user but also to the manufacturer and the dealer. Dealerships like Autopolis will know the health status of a vehicle more quickly than its owner, allowing them to address malfunctions before they become a problem for the driver. We are heavily investing in these advanced connectivity technologies."

"I can assure you that these are fundamental changes for our teams, who must acquire new skills. These investments are substantial, but they will allow us to take a significant step forward in our development strategy."