



Microsoft Azure Case Study



Summary

Region: LatinAmerica
Industry: Agribusiness

Client profile

Agribusiness company developing grain products for crops and exploitation based on soybean, corn, cotton, wheat and sunflower.

Initial situation

The end of the technical support contract for the servers at the company's own datacenter was drawing to a close and the company needed to ensure the continuity of the business.

Solution

The computer center migrated to Microsoft Azure.

Benefits

- This was the largest complete implementation of SAP solutions run on Microsoft Azure in the agribusiness sector at world level.
- Operational flexibility.
- Cost equation oriented towards profitability.
- Availability and access to applications and services from different places.
- Integratio of third party applications.

Comprehensive management of agricultural output with SAP solutions run on Microsoft Azure.

“This was a strategic decision. By using Microsoft Azure as a platform for our computer center we were able to guarantee the continuity of our business and keep pace with the company’s growth from the IT department.”

Cesar Oliveira, IT Corporate Director.

El Tejar, a company dedicated to intensive crop farming, migrated its entire datacenter to Microsoft Azure. The project included 60 servers, including those used for the full installation of SAP, which was one of the largest-ever implementations of its kind in the agricultural sector. The new set-up offers the flexibility and access needed to keep pace with a dynamic and demanding business managing over 100,000 hectares of different crops, using farming-specific applications which are fully integrated with the tax and governmental authorities . The company is now able to provide its operations with comprehensive support, no easy task as they are spread out over a broad geographic area, present a high degree of complexity and are often far-removed from urban centers.

“One of the key reasons underlying the decision concerned the speed with which we planned and carried out the migration. In just five months, we had moved 60 servers into the cloud, including several business-specific applications and the full installation of SAP as our management system.”

Gastón Cosma, Wezen Group.

Situation

El Tejar is an Argentine crop farming concern with over 20 years' activity in the agricultural commodities market. It grows and markets soybean, corn, cotton, wheat and sunflower crops at regional level. El Tejar farms its own land and strives to meet strict sustainable farming criteria. The company currently runs over 100,000 hectares.

The company's production model is based on the organization of integrated agricultural centers hosting a number of activities, in addition to sowing and crop-growing, such as harvesting, storage, research and development facilities. El Tejar also has its own machinery workshops and in some locations runs its own electricity plants.

The location of these centers and the numbers of people involved prompted the company to establish complete communities where their staff and farm workers live with their families. The communities also have their own schools and there are recreational and cultural activities.

“Our operating processes are quite complex. Some of our farming units are in extremely remote areas and each one involves handling a broad spectrum of variables that are constantly changing,” says Bernabé Muro, the company's Comptroller.

“We have been using SAP in our integrated management system for a long time. However, when we saw that we were nearing the end of the maintenance contract for the HP servers at our Datacenter, we considered the possibility of migrating to a cloud-based structure, given the characteristics of our business,” adds Cesar Oliveira, IT Corporate Director at El Tejar.

Solution

Following the successful implementation of the corporate contingency response system, El Tejar decided to migrate its entire datacenter, involving 60 servers, to Microsoft Azure.

“This was a strategic decision. By using Microsoft Azure as a platform for our computer center, we were able to guarantee the continuity of our business and keep pace with the company's growth from the IT department,” says Oliveira. Gastón Cosma, from the Wezen Group, the Microsoft partner with expertise in Azure and responsible for overseeing this migration plan, adds that *“One of the key reasons underlying the decision concerned the speed with which we planned and carried out the migration. In just five months, we had moved 60 servers into the cloud, including several business-specific applications and the full installation of SAP as our management system.”*

El Tejar is one of a mere handful of agricultural companies in the world which run their operations using SAP. *“We have 17 servers which run the full version of this application with all its modules (Finance, Controlling, HR, Sales & Dist., Materials Management, Project System, Plant Maintenance, Quality Management, Production Planning and Control, Task and Resource Management). We had excellent references about the SAP cloud-based solution and, given the particular features of our business which is spread out over a wide area and the connectivity throughout all our sites, we decided to set everything up on Microsoft Azure and use it in this environment. We understood that this would provide us with the capabilities, flexibility and support we need, which is highly reassuring,”* explains Oliveira. SAP has been streamlined to operate on Azure and the implementation carried out by El Tejar includes the areas of production, research and QA.

For further information

To find out more about Microsoft products and services, visit: www.microsoft.com/argentina

For further details on El Tejar, visit: www.eltejar.com

For information on the Wezen Group, visit: www.wezengroup.com

A particular feature of interest is that the organization's Active Directory also runs on the same platform in the cloud. The Directory supports the identity check and security system and was recently synchronized with the implementation of Office 365. It also contains specific applications designed to monitor the performance of agricultural machinery, crop cycles, a geoinformation system to manage "precision farming", a business intelligence application, another designed to manage technical support, software developed to help with calculating taxes, duties and tariffs and another to manage livestock and handle the issue of phytosanitary certification; applications containing SAP manuals and instructions, others for process management and mechanization, and a software program developed to provide a virtual classroom and online training on demand for personnel. "We were also working under time pressures for two reasons: on the one hand, the end of the support and maintenance contract for the servers, and on the other, the start of harvest time. We had a very narrow window of time in which to get everything done, and thanks to the Wezen Group, we managed to pull it off," explains the Corporate Director of IT. Another major contribution was made by SAP expert firm Agile, which helped to get the system up and running in the new environment.

"Each fully loaded truck must be weighed before leaving the field and the corresponding invoice must be filled out immediately. We are connected directly to the local tax authorities at each location and are thus able to make the relevant payments on the spot. We've successfully linked the applications included in the process on Azure to each organism involved," says Cosma.

Many of El Tejar's processes are automated, lending the organization even greater dynamism.

Another singular aspect of this company's operations is that each farming unit not only deals with issues related to agribusiness, but also handles matters pertaining to the communities of employees and their families. It uses the same infrastructure system to manage eating arrangements, schools, and any other basic necessities which may arise in these small populations.

Benefits

"Microsoft Azure has given us the ideal solution to upgrade our datacenter, improving reliability and flexibility, which has increased our efficiency all round. It is without doubt a huge achievement to have moved 60 servers with a full SAP solution in barely 5 months, due as much to the features of this platform as to the technological partners who helped us, Agile and, in particular, Wezen," summarizes Oliveira.

Senior management has the information it needs at any time to assess the company's situation and performance at a glance from any location.

"Now that our datacenter is fully lodged on Microsoft Azure, we have achieved optimum integration and a high level of efficiency, despite the geographical dispersion of our operational sites. We manage over 100,000 hectares and six different crops with different yield times and needs, ranging from R&D to harvest and sales. We are working in a highly challenging market and it is thus extremely reassuring to know that Microsoft is behind our systems infrastructure," concludes the businessman.

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