Verhoek Europe Renews Data Center and Workspace with Liquit
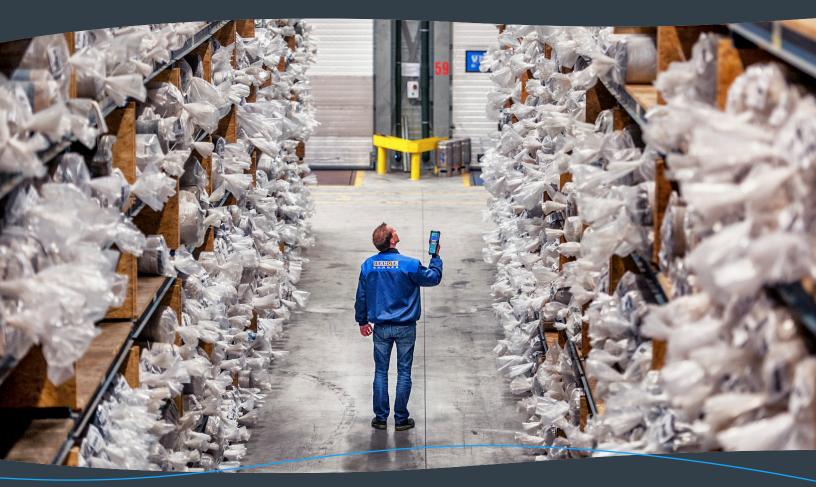
Customer: Founded in 1953, Verhoek Europe is a family-owned logistics and transport company that began by transporting reeds and rushes but evolved to support the carpet, awning, and industrial door industries through warehousing and transport. The international provider has 13 branches across Europe, with extensive warehousing and a transportation fleet of 425 trucks and 550 trailers.

Challenge: The company had an outdated legacy data center infrastructure and individual PCs that needed to update to a hybrid cloud environment supporting a remote workforce. This would support the creation of the much needed anywhere, anytime, any device application access and unified workspace experience.

Solution: Verhoek Europe opted for a hybrid solution consisting of a small VMware environment for power users and remote desktop services from Microsoft. Liquit Workspace, in combination with Liquit Release & Patch Management, functions as the strategic platform on this landscape. The company chose FSLogix for profile management.

Results: Verhoek now has 80 to 90 'concurrent connections'; users who are active at the same time daily with 190 people in total who have quick and simple access to the Liquit Workspace platform for 90 percent of differing endpoint device users and the 10 percent of RDS (Remote Desktop Server) users. Logon times have gone from a minute to several seconds, while they can get version-specific, roll-based application access via a uniform interface.

Verhoek Europe

Founded in 1953, Verhoek Europe specializes in warehousing and the transport of long goods such as industrial doors and awnings. The company has thirteen branches and a fleet of 425 trucks and 550 trailers that enable them to operate throughout almost all of Europe. The third generation-run family business proudly and passionately uses all their knowledge, experience, and equipment to make service provision as simple as possible for everyone.

How IT supports the mission

According to Verhoek Europe IT Manager Rudy Selles, the company needed a future-proof IT and workspace infrastructure that was standardized and centralized with workplace independence for all employees:
"In order to realize Verhoek's future strategy, our IT platform needed to be addressed so that it could support our ambitions. In an internal IT session, we defined two subprojects. Our first project was to address the outdated data center infrastructure, which had to be replaced by a new, future-proof environment. The second project focused on workspace independence, where personal work environments had to be available anywhere, anytime, and from any device."

System Administrator Martijn Dunnink explained why the outdated infrastructure (where everyone within the company was still working on individually installed PCs) led to standardization and performance challenges:

"The existing platform had performance issues because it was used for application virtualization, but it was not suitable for providing a complete work environment for all users. We started looking for a solution based on the three starting points of centralized management, virtual workstations, and uniformity. Roughly 90 percent of our company consists of 'transactional employees' and 10 percent of employees who need an IT environment that is more customized, so it was critical to have all of them 'land' on the same central environment."

Verhoek Europe entered conversations with Netherlands-based IT integration and consulting firm Netflex. "During an inspiration session, we agreed to set up a proof of concept based on remote desktop services from Microsoft," explained Martijn. "Netflex added Liquit Workspace to the demo environment as the 'glue' to improve the ability to work from home, create a central work environment for employees, and help us realize long-term goals."

Liquit as a strategic tool

The logistics and transport company opted for a hybrid solution comprising a small VMware environment for power users and remote desktop services from Microsoft. Liquit Workspace (in combination with Liquit Release & Patch Management) functions as the landscape's strategic platform, while FSLogix has been chosen for profile management. "Our teams installed the Liquit software on the server within fifteen minutes and immediately began user testing in a single morning," says Martijn.

The complete project started at the end of February, and by March, part of it 'ran' on four hosts. Plans changed because the pandemic required everyone to work from home, which prompted the team to speed up the platform rollout. "We transferred as many people as possible to the platform and started experimenting with Liquit so that people who do very specific work could now do it from home," explained Martijn. "The flexibility of Liquit Workspace is unbelievable because it does everything we wanted and more while helping us to get a lot of people working from home very quickly."

Martijn explained how Verhoek Europe started by giving its customer service employees the opportunity to work from home, which was soon followed by other departments and expanded functionalities:

"When the initial chaos of the pandemic period had subsided a bit, we expanded the capacity of the platform and started making more applications available," explained Martijn. Netflex advised us to introduce roll-based access, which meant that each user's needs would dictate what applications they could access. It also governed whether a user could use standard Remote Desktop Services or specific needs would require a personal environment based on VMware. Liquit gives us the flexibility to deal with these distinct roles for the platform and the set of applications. We take care of everything, such as specific settings for applications, so users have transparent access to very user-friendly applications."

Verhoek now has 80 to 90 'concurrent connections' with users who are active at the same time daily, while 190 people have access to the platform. Martijn explained how that level of application access flexibility works to support the company in important ways: "Liquit Workspace is simple and accessible on the management side because IT can quickly deliver applications. When you create an application, you are dealing with a so-called 'swim lane.' That means a process that takes the app through development, testing, acceptance, and production phases. You can quickly restore a previous version, so a user simply presses a button and is back to the earlier situation. If something goes wrong in the phase from test to production, you can easily go back to the old version. That is what we like: software that does things differently from the established order, which is powerful."

Further refinement and development

"We were delighted with the strategic choice we had made earlier," says Rudy. "Liquit has helped us incredibly, otherwise it wouldn't have been possible for our employees to work from home. The sped-up roll-out of the platform required us to slow the refinement process, but we are now working on that."

With Liquit Workspace, the new implementation offers a uniform interface and a lot of flexibility, as Martijn explained: "With Liquit, we want to offer users even more self-service, so if something does not work, they can solve it themselves in a few steps (without a helpdesk). Sometimes an application does not work in our network because we have locations all over Europe. If there is no response, Liquit closes the application and restarts it, which is much nicer for the user. We have also been able to drastically reduce the logon times with FSLogix. It does not matter which server you end up on, you can continue where you left off. The entire project had a major impact on time savings as it normally took 30 seconds to a minute to go from first click to fully loaded, but it now takes just 8 seconds."

The solution went live in early 2020, with subsequent improvements being made continually since then.

About Liquit

Founded in 2015 in the Netherlands, Liquit is a software vendor that delivers Enterprise-ready End-to-End Application Management for Hybrid Environments. Liquit bridges the gap between the IT department and the end-users. The Liquit platform makes accessing corporate IT resources for end-users less complex and easier than ever. With Liquit, IT departments have the tools that empower them to immediately respond to business requirements, enhance user productivity, and give their organization a competitive advantage.

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