



## Leasinvest achieves maximum mobility thanks to innovative computer use



Leasinvest Real Estate, the real estate investment group, moved into a new head office at the end of 2007. ICT partner Simac installed an infrastructure in these premises to pave the way for the company's modern working methods, customized for employee mobility. Simac installed two server racks with VMware servers, one of which is a Citrix server, to serve the Leasinvest satellite offices. They now have remote access to all the company applications without them being installed locally on PCs. Home-workers can connect with all applications via a secure internet connection (VPN). In order to give optimal working resources to these mobile employees, Leasinvest also switched over to Microsoft Exchange 2007. Users can now read emails that are sent to the office on their Windows Mobile smartphones. Leasinvest is also planning to install Citrix on these telephones in the future. They are also saving on the maintenance of the ICT infrastructure, which Simac performs remotely.



## Profile

Leasinvest Real Estate, the real estate investment group, invests primarily in office, logistics and retail buildings. The company has fifty buildings in Belgium and Luxembourg, 72% of which are offices. Leasinvest Real Estate, established in 1999, is listed on Euronext Brussels. The most important shareholders are Ackermans & van Haaren and AXA Belgium. Leasinvest has seventeen employees and an annual turnover of 56 million euro.

## Challenge

The growth of the company resulted in Leasinvest's existing offices becoming too small. At the end of 2007, the company therefore moved into a new and larger head office in the centre of Antwerp. Leasinvest called in the help of its regular ICT partner, Simac, to install the company's ICT network in the new premises.

## Solution

Simac installed two HP servers, which were split into 5 virtual servers using VMware technology, in Leasinvest's new computer room. This guarantees the company and its end-users a higher redundancy and a higher availability of the ICT infrastructure. Leasinvest also migrated from Lotus Notes to Microsoft Outlook. Simac was easily able to spread these and other business applications over the new servers. They now run centrally on Citrix technology, and no longer on employees' PCs. The mobile employees connect to the network via VPN.

## Advantages

- Quick installation of the new servers
- Redundancy guarantee
- Higher availability
- Faster network for employees
- All applications remotely accessible:  
simplified mobile and home-working
- Automated back-ups
- Cost-saving thanks to remote maintenance
- Reliable Microsoft environment for new e-mail software
- Infrastructure ready for digital future



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**Sven Janssens, Head of Property Management  
at Leasinvest**

As an investor in buildings, the real estate investment group Leasinvest wants its offices to be state-of-the-art. The company's head office no longer met these requirements however, and it gradually became too small because of the growth of the company. The company has seventeen employees but this number will increase in the course of 2008. For these reasons, Leasinvest took the decision to move into renovated premises in the heart of Antwerp at the end of 2007. It used this move to take the opportunity to revamp its ICT infrastructure, tailored to the real estate company's innovative growth strategy.

As well as its head office in Antwerp, the investment company also has a number of satellite offices in Brussels and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Leasinvest wanted to centralize all the group's ICT and also integrate these delocalized offices in the new infrastructure. The employees can connect remotely to the systems in Antwerp. This simplifies home-working, amongst other things. After a brief round of information gathering, Leasinvest set sail with ICT service provider Simac, already a home provider for some three years.

"Simac offered us the most efficient and advanced solution. Our business is buying and leasing buildings. This means we are on the road a lot, so mobility is a very important factor. We want to be able to use our business applications wherever we go", explains Sven Janssens, Head of Property Management at Leasinvest. "This played a very important role in the renovation of our new head office premises. The new servers had to be powerful enough to provide our satellite offices and home-workers with access to our business applications."

### 100% availability of business applications

Simac therefore installed a small data-centre in the new Leasinvest computer room. "We put in two racks with two HP servers, which we virtualized with VMware software. There are now 5 virtual servers running on the two machines. This guarantees higher availability, amongst other things", says Rigo Van Eyken, System Engineer at Simac. "If one server drops out, the other just carries on working. This means all the applications won't crash. Furthermore, there is also continuous synchronization between both machines, so the virtual servers immediately switch over in the event of a problem."

Leasinvest used to have different physical servers: mail server, print servers, file server, etc. "If one of these components failed, everything failed", says Janssens. "Thanks to virtualization, we have been able to scrap hardware and link the virtual servers to each other. This significantly increases the availability of our busi-

ness applications. And this was necessary, because we work from home a lot so our machines have to be able to keep running."

### Central management of ICT applications thanks to Citrix

For these reasons, Leasinvest also switched over to Citrix. All applications run centrally and the employees have access to the systems via the local computer network or via a secure internet connection (VPN). Only the Office packages still run locally on the end-users' laptops. PCs are also started up in Citrix for mobile employees, as long as they can detect an internet connection. This means employees can access accounting software and certain databases, amongst other things on the network, so they can always see the most up-to-date information. The synchronization takes place automatically via the VPN line.

Simac can also connect to the systems in Antwerp via the internet. This means the applications can be maintained remotely from now on. The ICT service provider can also ensure that the latest versions of the applications are always installed. And thanks to the central Citrix servers, everyone now works with the same software versions. This also means Leasinvest can keep its maintenance costs down.

The security of the company data was another important reason for Leasinvest switching over to the Citrix technology. The company information can never fall into the wrong hands. As a company listed on the stock exchange, it has to ensure it remains constantly operational, so it has to treat company data very carefully. Simac provided additional security with the installation of a second separate back-up system. The back-ups are first done automatically via a back-up library, a kind of exchange robot with different tapes for every day of the week. A second tape system also does a full back-up of the Leasinvest data every day. These tapes are changed over on a daily basis, and stored in a secure fire-resistant safe. With its double back-up infrastructure, Leasinvest satisfies the conditions set by the Banking, Finance and Insurance Commission.

### Simac installs Exchange for mobile access to e-mail

Mobility has become crucial for Leasinvest. "Half our people spend half their time on the road. Thanks to Citrix and the professional installation by Simac, it makes no difference to us which office we are in. There is also no delay caused by us connecting to our systems from a different location. Our mobile employees have the same click-speed as on the local network

in the office. So they won't notice any difference from the previous set-up. ICT is an important instrument that people have to work with. The switch-over has to be as seamless as possible. We tested the migration together with Simac a month in advance, and everything went smoothly."

In order to give these mobile workers optimal working resources, Leasinvest also switched over from Lotus Notes to Microsoft's e-mail software, Exchange. Exchange offers more flexibility with peripheral equipment, according to Janssens. This will make it easier for the company to be able to integrate Windows Mobile with its smartphones. Leasinvest therefore not only entrusted the ICT, but also the telecom management, to Simac. This means the real estate investment company still only has one point of contact for both its ITC and its telephony. Simac arranges all the contracts for mobile phones, smartphones and BlackBerries, and also takes care of managing the printing stations and PDAs.

#### **Future: Citrix on the smartphones**

Leasinvest also has plans to integrate Citrix with these clever telephones. "By making the company applications available remotely, we can speed up a number of business processes. Previously, when our mobile employees noticed a problem in one of our business parks, they sent an e-mail to the head office where an appointment was then made with a supplier. In the future they will be able to enter this request directly in the management system. We will then no longer need to process these e-mail requests. This will give our administrative employees more time for other tasks. And the other way round, our remote employees will also have immediate access to the leaseholder details they need, with a summary of orders and the status of the building. We are looking at how we can make this happen, but with the new infrastructure we are already ready for it. More and more information is becoming digital, and Leasinvest wants to take advantage of this trend. We want to read our leaseholders' meter readings into our systems automatically, for example. This digitalization requires a sizeable storage network, and this is no problem with our new computer room. We are perhaps putting on a jacket that is slightly too big, but ICT is after all becoming increasingly important."



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**Sven Janssens, Head of Property Management at Leasinvest**



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