Hewlett Packard Enterprise | **Microsoft**

Digital transformation

Dear Reader,

Today's IT leaders are aware that a digital transformation is vital to achieving and maintaining success. An organisation's IT and finance department and other stakeholders have a shared commitment toward the business in making this revolution happen – sometimes supported by new laws and regulations. All this necessitates rapid action in order to keep up-to-date and remain relevant.

Individual companies and organisations are also looking for opportunities to forge new partnerships, improve digital collaboration and explore new business and supply-chain models.

This publication tells the story of how five Dutch industry leaders are not only putting their IT resources at the service of their organisations, but also how IT serves as an enabler and helps to create innovations, streamline processes and – above all – allows employees to collaborate more smoothly and securely by giving them access to valuable tools and resources.

We make a point of highlighting the 'digital journey' in our publication, as we feel this is the key to inspiring you and can provide you with fresh new insights.

You will find that all of the solutions described are based on Microsoft and HPE technologies. In partnering with InSpark and Microsoft, we seek to provide our clients with superior solutions that meet their business needs.

We would be happy to discuss the options available with you any time – until then, we hope you enjoy reading this publication.

Yours sincerely,

Arie den Boer
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Mazars Story

Digital transformation in a traditional environment

## 5. Digital transformation in a traditional environment

Mazars | Frank Keessen, IT Director

Global audit, accounting and consulting group Mazars went from using simple Excel spreadsheets to developing its own platform – a massive transformation for the company, which operates in a traditional sector. Having the courage to take the lead, starting in the Netherlands, Mazars now serves as a textbook example of how a company can fully and successfully integrate all its procedures.

While Mazars may employ 18,000 people worldwide, the world of banking and tax consultancy in which it operates is still very much a traditional one. Yet even this organisation could no longer ignore the digital revolution, starting at its offices in the Netherlands, with a workforce of around 900 people. Keessen was involved from the outset in the digital transformation Mazars underwent at its Dutch offices. It all started around two and a half years ago, when they decided to take a critical look at their client services.

"We asked ourselves if we were really meeting our clients' needs and if there might be ways of improving our services. We had four types of portals clients could use, each of which came with its own user experience. Mazars simply had a traditional sort of worldview, and while we were aware of the emergence of technologies such as blockchain, our sector was slow to embrace them, and we still have some way to go in that regard today. But we cannot afford to ignore these technologies, and our challenge is to improve both the client experience and our internal processes.
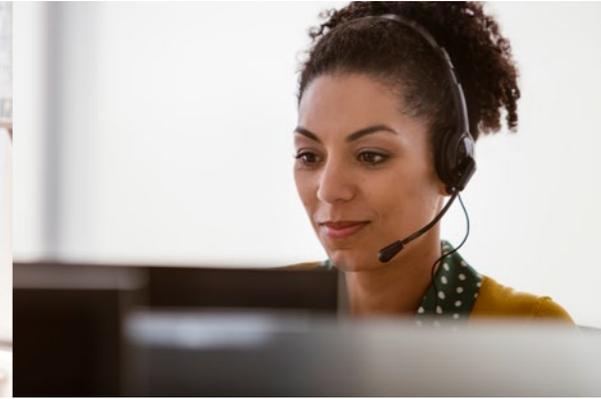
Relevant to the client

It turns out that is not the only challenge faced by Mazars: "Our Enschede office and the Amsterdam office each used different processes for preparing the financial statements, even though this involved the same financial statements and the same organisation. So we needed to optimise these internal processes and make them more flexible. And that was only one of many issues we were dealing with, which is not surprising when you're serving clients in 45 countries. We're currently in the process of aligning these systems and will soon be able to present ourselves as a fully integrated firm. We developed a system called Signals, which makes us something of a pioneer in our sector, which tends towards the traditional. We were looking to create a solid electronic platform to communicate with our clients, through which we could offer a high-quality user experience. We would send out all these types of communications, but we wanted to make these both more personal and more relevant. In addition to requesting clients to check and approve their tax returns and so on, we wanted to provide them with information that would actually be of value to them. For example, we used to update our clients through email newsletters, in which we would write something like: 'As a company operating in the transport and logistics industry, you might be interested in [fill in the blank].' Now, we're more likely to say: 'Based on the data available on your company in our system, we would like to provide you with service X or Y.' In other words, we would like to offer much more relevant information to our clients. Although that might sound odd coming from an IT manager, there's a trend of IT playing an increasingly important role in co-creation processes with various stakeholders, including the business and the marketing department."

A single environment

"We started out by looking at what products were available in the market, but we found these to be somewhat limited and, for the most part, designed for practical collaboration. There are roughly two independent providers of these types of portals, who jointly control 85 per cent of the market. We bill ourselves as a company with a mind and style of its own, so we decided to launch our own platform in the Netherlands first. Of course, the idea was to eventually roll it out to our offices in the rest of the world, but we wanted to start out small and then take it from there. The Signals platform has enabled us to improve our client relations, and automate and optimise processes and procedures. We wanted to be able to keep track of the projects everyone is involved in and at what stage they are in these projects, and our digital platform provides this and other benefits. We wanted to launch the platform first for mobile phones, and we're now adding a native app, but the plan is to use a web-based system eventually. Signals provides us with a single environment based on two different angles. We barely even used the four client portals we used to run – not exactly what you would call customer friendly."

We currently use a single platform for collaboration. There's a timeline on the client side and a dashboard on our side through which the processes are run, which makes the whole process much easier to manage because you can see what's going on at all times. What is that client working on right now, what documents do they need to provide, or do they need to approve something? This is supported by all the back-office applications, which supply all this data. We had access to this information before, but it was all managed manually in Excel spreadsheets. So I think it's safe to say we've undergone something of an upgrade."

Structure

"The timeline serves to lead the client through the process, but we offer more than that, for example, tips on interesting seminars. Instead of receiving an email from us, our clients now find relevant news in their own digital environment. The benefit for us is that we can see the current processes for each client and to which we need to send extra communications, and when." The process of exchanging data for audits used to take a long time, even in 2017.

"We would send out these customised templates of questionnaires to our clients and request that they complete them by a certain date. The data was supplied to us through various channels, and we would then set to work on structuring all this raw data. To make the process as user-friendly as possible, we developed a fully interactive exchange platform."
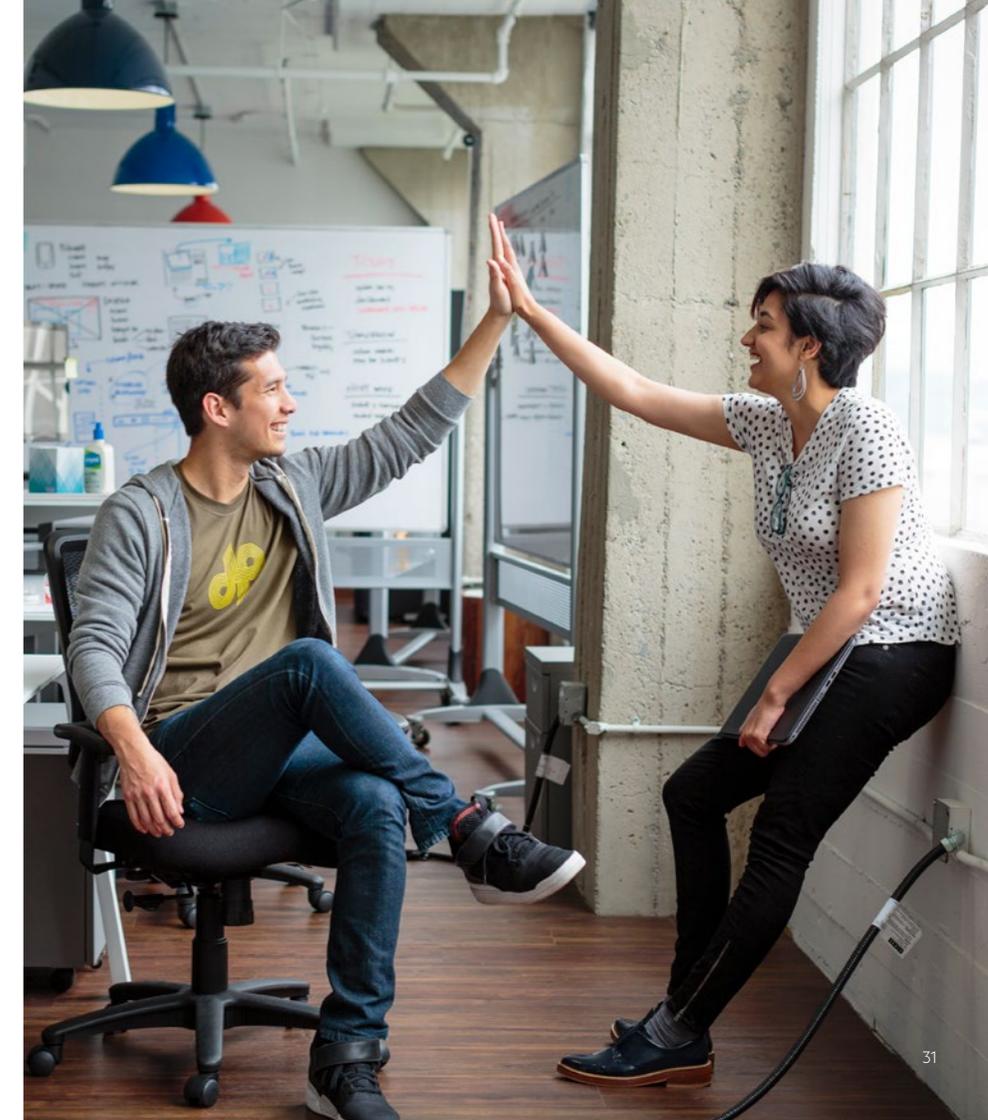
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van onze klanten maakt gebruik van Signals

Signals runs in Microsoft Azure. "You need to make sure all these different back-office systems – some of which would qualify as legacy – keep running, but they will gradually be replaced with cloud applications. We created a generic authentication layer for the platform, based on Okta, the purpose of which is to separate user

identities from the actual platform. This gives us the flexibility we need to use Signals to offer SSO to other platforms. In looking for a consistent presentation for our clients, we opted for a PaaS version of Sitecore, which is also available in Azure. In fact, Azure enables us to scale up and down as needed."

Guts

The results the company has achieved since adopting Signals speak for themselves: "Eighty per cent of our clients currently use Signals. We've already processed tens of thousands of tax returns, there's no longer a need to spend money on all sorts of other platforms and portals, and we save lots of time to boot. This was a massive transformation, which was successful mainly because we clearly explained to people why it was necessary and what the benefits were. We were able to get people involved, and what's also important is that we had the guts to go ahead with it. There were plenty of people in the market who told me I wouldn't be able to pull it off, but that only made me more eager to prove them wrong. Even though you're dealing with

traditional people who'd prefer to keep things the way they are, the trick is to win over just a few of them by getting them excited about the changes. It took time, a positive attitude, guts, and just a smattering of luck as well. I deliberately didn't sell it to people as this type of large-scale transformation – I simply told them that we'd be improving our current processes, and then I explained what steps this would involve. Also, I continued to communicate with people throughout the process. Some of my colleagues were perfectly happy with their Excel spreadsheets, but walking through our department recently, I saw around 30 screens on which people were using Signals. As you understand, I couldn't have been more pleased."

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