SYNTAX

HIMA's Strategic Move to a Cloud-First Future on Microsoft Azure

Innovation and progress have fueled the evolution of HIMA Paul Hildebrandt GmbH since its founding in 1908. The HIMA Group is the world's independent provider of of safety-oriented automation solutions for the process manufacturing and railroad industries for the protection of people, the environment and economic assets. For more than 50 years, HIMA has been partner of the world's largest companies in the process industry (including chemicals, petrochemicals, energy, and oil and gas).

Headquartered in Germany, the family-owned company now has more than 800 employees worldwide. HIMA ensures that industrial plants remain safe and fault-free in the digital age with "Smart Safety" to run safely and error-free. As an organization of safety experts operating around the globe, HIMA is using is using digital transformation to become more customer-oriented and has made IT systems fit for the future. And HIMA chose Syntax as their partner for modernizing and transforming its entire global IT infrastructure.

HIMA   **INDUSTRY**: Safety Technology

Central and Digital – via OneERP and OneIT to OneGroup

HIMA implemented a comprehensive modernization strategy under the name OneGroup. This bold initiative was designed to provide customers around the world with consistently high quality products and services through uniform processes and technologies. Against this backdrop, a global ERP system was to be introduced under the project name OneERP, along with a centralized communication and collaboration platform under the name OneIT.

The goal was to optimize collaboration within the HIMA Group through greater transparency and central availability of data, orders, and processes. To get there, each of the individual offices created over a past period of international expansion needed to be brought together onto a unified IT platform and future-proofed.

Meticulous planning was needed to meet the challenge of HIMA's IT infrastructure, which had grown over many years into a complex heterogeneous and decentralized interface landscape.

The OneIT project thus played a key role as an enabler for the larger business transformation. The scope wasn't simply limited to the infrastructural requirements for OneERP and a uniform platform for globally networked work. A core objective of the project was to modernize and standardize the IT equipment across all locations in Europe, Asia and the USA. It was quite an undertaking!

"It was clear to us that we didn't want to tackle this all-round renewal as part of OneIT with a simple service provider, but only with a competent partner at our side," explains Rudolf Lein, Director Global IT at HIMA.

"We were looking for professional experts with a broad service portfolio, global proximity to our locations, and a deep understanding of medium-sized companies' specialized requirements. That's why we chose Syntax."
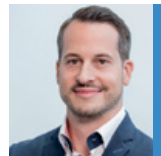
Rudolf Lein
Director Global IT
HIMA Paul Hildebrandt GmbH

Phase One:

Global Connection to the Private Cloud

After the launch of OneIT, the first step was to create the right infrastructure for a global IT application landscape. "This is where Syntax's extensive expertise in architectural matters came in handy, especially during the consulting and planning process," says Lein.

HIMA first worked with Syntax to establish a central data center hub in Europe that would manage the Active Directory, the global mail system and various applications used throughout the company and make them accessible to all employees in a secure environment. This "control center" was designed to be operated in the Syntax Enterprise Cloud.

The next step was to gradually phase out the old legacy infrastructures and connect all locations to the new hub in the Syntax server. This was implemented by establishing global WAN routes, which were optimizedusing an SD-WAN concept.

Since the various offices around the world cannot do without their own IT infrastructure, a concept for harmonization was also needed. A highly available, secure network and server infrastructure was therefore created for all sites under the heading of "Standard Office Infrastructure" based on a modular principle. "The locations were grouped according to the number of employees, following the example of common XS, S, M, L, XL and assigned the corresponding standard hardware configurations," Lein recalls. "This helped us a lot to configure the new hardware according to requirements and efficiently without any repeated discussions on the number of access points or switches needed."

Phase Two:

From "No Cloud" to "Cloud First" with Azure

While the connection to the private cloud was still in progress, HIMA decided to take another big step towards the digital future. "At the beginning of 2019, we broke with old patterns and decided, in the spirit of 'cloud first', we decided to focus more on the public cloud in the future, and more specifically on Microsoft Azure," says Lein.

The decision in favor of Microsoft Azure was made for strategic reasons, because HIMA's plans are to use the entire Microsoft 365 communications and collaboration structure from the public cloud.

Other reasons Azure made sense were improved cost efficiency and the ability to offer certain services more flexibly on a platform basis - not only within the company, but also for end customers. "But such a move is easier said than done and requires comprehensive planning, architectural expertise and a realistic assessment," Lein explains. "Do we have sufficient bandwidth available to use the application in a performant way from the public cloud? How do we adequately secure access to the applications? How do we prevent critical data from leaking out? And how do we integrate these applications securely into our on-premises IT landscape? That's why we were happy to work with Syntax, which already has experienced public cloud and Azure professionals on our side."

After initial pilot projects, the computer-aided engineering (CAE) system was moved to the Azure cloud at the beginning of 2021. The computationally intensive CAD software is the foundation of all major plant projects. And by moving to the cloud, HIMA benefits from operating with both scalable computing power and high availability worldwide.

Phase Three:
Secure and Flexible into the Future

To continue carrying out its cloud-first strategy, HIMA plans upcoming Azure projects together with Syntax - and so doing, makes full use of the IT service provider's cloud expertise. "Syntax plans the right hybrid cloud architecture with us, elaborates it on an ongoing basis to ensure it stays in line with our requirements and, integrates it into its Managed Cloud Services to ensure that the backend runs easily and without disruption."

In addition, HIMA focused on another aspect in which Syntax was able to provide support as a partner at eye level: IT Security Services. As an expert in functional safety and security, the company itself offers its customers numerous services in cybersecurity for industrial IT. For this reason, the company's own IT infrastructure is subject to the highest possible security requirements.

In parallel with this gradual move to the public cloud, additional security services will be added to the existing perimeter protection. The big advantage is that Syntax can provide all services, including security monitoring, through its 24x7 security operations center. That level of security coverage would not be attainable for HIMA on its own, as a medium-sized company.

HIMA will continue to shoulder all these upcoming projects hand in hand with Syntax, because, says Rudolf Lein:

"Syntax has not only proven itself to be a reliable service provider for the trouble-free operation of our IT landscape. We also have received exactly what we need thanks to their in-depth expertise and dedicated employees - a strong partner at eye level for the realization of the OneIT strategy as the backbone of our digital transformation."

How Syntax's Managed Cloud Services in Azure Might Work for You

With our deep understanding of enterprise cloud computing, we offer services to suit your cloud specific needs. Our strong governance, proven processes, and experience designing and architecting workloads in Microsoft Azure give you peace of mind, knowing that you have a partner with the people, security capabilities, and track record to manage your public cloud.

Visit syntax.com/azure to learn more.

About Syntax

Syntax provides comprehensive technology solutions as a trusted global advisor and application-management services to power businesses' mission critical applications in the cloud.

With 50 years of experience, 700+ customers, and nearly 2,000 employees around the world, Syntax has deep expertise in implementing and managing ERP and other applications deployments in secure private, public, and hybrid environments. Syntax partners with SAP, Oracle, JD Edwards, AWS, Microsoft, and other global technology leaders to ensure customers' applications are seamless, secure, and at the forefront of enterprise technology innovation.

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