

The transformation of BVO Rijn and Braassem into a fully-fledged governance organisation



AMBITIONS

- Improvement of the service provisioning to the municipalities of 'Alphen aan den Rijn' and 'Kaag en Braassem'
- Modernisation of the infrastructure
- Relieving strain on technical management, security and governance
- Diminishing focus on recruiting expertise within the organisation through outsourcing



SOLUTIONS

- Consultancy in the change process towards a governance organisation
- A Secure by Design private cloud environment, set up in accordance with Solvinity's strict, high-level security and compliance standards
- Gradual takeover of the operational governance of chain partners by Solvinity
- Workstation management, (W)LAN network and SOC/SIEM services by subcontractor Axians

Solvinity provides manageable, stable and safe municipal IT

Since 2018, the municipalities of 'Alphen aan den Rijn' and 'Kaag en Braassem' have worked together on digitisation and automation. They are intensifying this partnership through the joint business management organisation, 'Bedrijfsvoeringsorganisatie Rijn en Braassem' (BVO). This BVO was formed in order to standardise the service, including the establishment of municipal workflows and the application landscape. In order to attain these objectives, not only was a stable, safe and compliant infrastructure needed, but also the switch towards a governance organisation.

The benefits of municipal partnership in IT are obvious: process integration and professional development of the organisation, as well as more opportunities to properly fill specialist IT expertises (such as security management).

The BVO's mission is deceptively simple. "IT is not one of the municipality's core tasks," says Jos van Weers, Team Manager of Policy, Governance and Information Provision in the BVO. "Even so, IT is essential to operations. This is why the BVO was set up: to provide a single central point of contact for all of the two municipalities' IT matters."

From acting to directing

The majority of the IT was managed by employees in the in-house data centres when the BVO was set up. The BVO was responsible for the management, ongoing development of the ICT infrastructure, the hosting of business applications as well as the management of external suppliers in the IT field. This hefty management burden consumed so many resources that it risked endangering the actual mission: to help the municipalities of 'Alphen aan den Rijn' and 'Kaag en Braassem' to achieve their objectives. Furthermore, it proved to be a major challenge to build up sufficient technical skill within the team with the redundancy required for business continuity. And that is a significant handicap, considering the rate of technological development in the market.

Therefore, the BVO chose to outsource the management of the IT environment and workstations. "The idea was that we would no longer have to recruit hard-to-find specialists ourselves and could leave a large portion of the technical management to external suppliers," says Van Weers.

RESULTS

- A fully-fledged governance organisation
- Exceptional infrastructure security and reliability
- A sound base for technological innovation (SaaS-ification and migration to public cloud)



ABOUT BVO RIJN & BRAASSEM

Since 1 January 2018, the municipalities of 'Alphen aan den Rijn' and 'Kaag en Braassem' have joined forces in the field of Digitisation and Automation to create the Rijn and Braassem inter-municipal cooperation (BVO: Bedrijfsvoeringsorganisatie). Even before this, both municipalities had been working closely together on social matters, taxation and related ICT issues, the initial focus being the standardisation of Digitisation and Automation services, including the development of a standard design for municipal work processes and the application landscape.

ABOUT SOLVINITY

Solvinity provides Secure Managed IT Services for organisations with stringent security requirements. Its innovative managed cloud solutions allow the company to support central government, municipalities and leading organisations in the financial and business service sectors. Solvinity advises them on their digital transformation, designs and builds the complex platforms on which mission-critical applications are able to operate securely and supplies software developers with CI/CD, container technology and 'Stretched' DevSecOps solutions. The organisation boasts an extensive security portfolio and very high standards for cybersecurity and certifications in accordance with (inter)national standards such as ISO 27001, 14001 and 9001, SOC 1 and 2 (including Azure) and PCI DSS. Solvinity has 350 employees and offices in Amsterdam, Assen, Amersfoort and Den Bosch. In 2021 it achieved an annual turnover of 59 million euros.

 **Solvinity**
Secure Managed IT Services

The European tender was won by Solvinity. Task number 1: the collective transformation of the BVO into a governance organisation. Outsourcing does not happen by itself but requires change in working methods and business processes. It can therefore take some getting used to if you're no longer 'at the controls' as an organisation because you have entrusted that to a supplier.

“ We hardly have to worry about technical management anymore ”

Jos van Weers, Team Manager of Policy, Governance and Information Provision at BVO Rijn & Braassem

Before Solvinity could take over the operation governance of other suppliers in the chain, they first entered a consultancy and change process with the BVO in order to prepare the organisation itself for this change. In the initial years, the focus was on straightening out SLA contracts with suppliers, setting up its own governance structure and cultural change. Another priority was thorough documentation. "We worked a lot with so-called local heroes whose knowledge was all in their own brains or in a single spreadsheet," explains Van Weers. "We worked out issues like this completely with Solvinity and converted them into managed services."

Together, the BVO and Solvinity developed a fully-fledged governance organisation with clear agreements between the different suppliers. This means that the governance can evolve further in the future, focusing not on individual parties but on entire value chains. And, in this way, the client/supplier relationship is increasingly transformed into a partnership within a shared ecosystem with added value for the BVO at the core.

Secure and reliable

Solvinity has also strengthened the BVO in technical areas. The infrastructure is transferred to the Solvinity private cloud and transformed further in order to ensure security is better safeguarded. The segmentation is protected further in accordance with the [NORA methodology](#) by protecting every infrastructure separately with firewalling, network monitoring and access control. Back-ups are made outside the client environment and comprehensive fall-back scenarios have been set up, in order to be able to mitigate ransomware attacks quickly, for example. Finally, the subcontractor Axians provides support with SOC/SIEM services.

Solvinity has implemented further efficiency measures in the likes of lifecycle management, patching and OS management, in which Axians manages (W)LAN networks. "We don't have to worry about the implementation as much," says Van Weers. "In that regard, it's great that we have a strong technological partner."

Workstation management is also provided by Axians. Together, Solvinity and Axians have ensured that the reliability of the service is kept high, even during disruptions. Van Weers uses the coronavirus crisis as an example. "It seems normal now, but at one time we all had to start working from home. And we managed it. Together with Solvinity we ensured that the people at home had the resources they needed to set up a home workstation. Solvinity supported us well in doing that."

The public cloud beckons

Following the expiry of the first license period at the start of 2023, the BVO has a secure and reliable private cloud environment, and the organisation is well suited to taking on the role of director. But the work is far from over yet. The partnership with Solvinity has been extended for another four years and will focus on innovation. The two organisations will concentrate on SaaS-ifying the application landscape, modernising the workstation proposition and office automation, improving the WAN network and the migration from private to public cloud. An ambitious challenge, though certainly attainable: "We now know that Solvinity is able to support us in this," concludes Van Weers.