

DP World Antwerp working on a digital terminal

DP World Antwerp, one of the largest container transshipment companies in the Port of Antwerp, wants to digitise the logistics behind its container loading and unloading as much as possible. This is quite a big job for CIO Patrick Putman and his team, so he's happy he can leave the project preparation and execution to his IT partners.

Thousands of containers are loaded and unloaded every day, with hundreds of lorries driving on and off site, manoeuvring between the many container cranes and giant ships that cannot be late – it's a logistical challenge that matters. So it goes without saying that it's a process that benefits greatly from a careful, sophisticated IT approach. To fully focus on it, CIO (Chief Information & Innovation Officer) Patrick Putman can't also be worrying about the day-to-day IT activities that all companies need to deal with: email, data management, updates to office applications, etc.

BETTER, MORE SECURE COLLABORATION

DP World Antwerp relies mainly on Microsoft Office 365 for this. It has some 350 licences in total, and an associated support contract. Several components have also been set up in Azure, with the necessary attention of course being paid to Identity & Access Management.

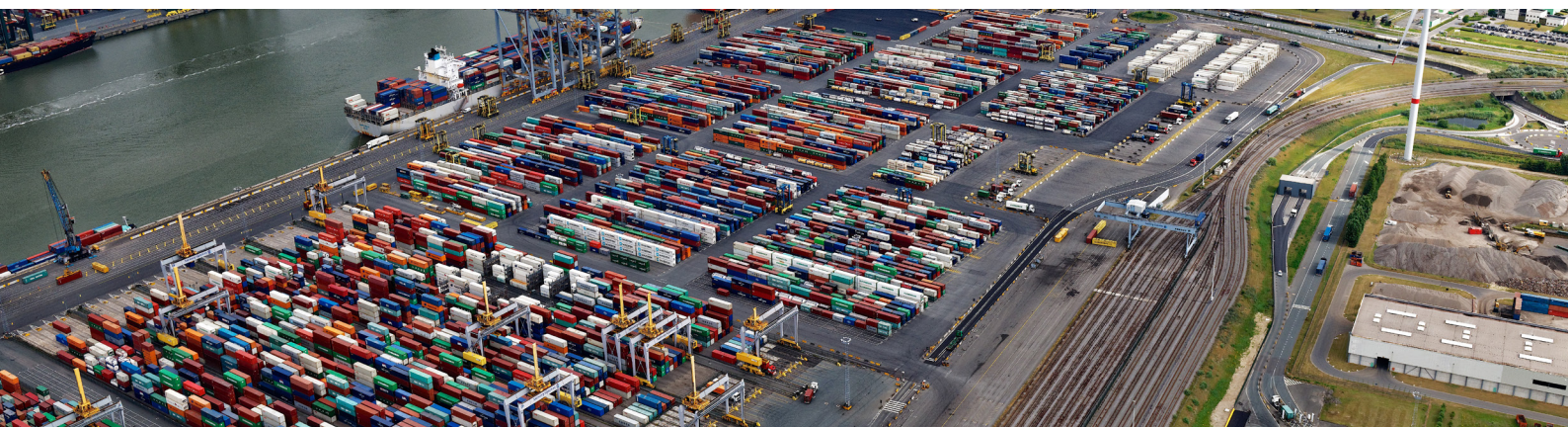
'This technology enables our employees to collaborate more without taking up too many resources,' explains Putman. 'We often collaborate ad hoc. Colleagues can consult with each other, share files and work on presentations via Microsoft Teams. This results in notably fewer physical meetings, which saves lots of time and improves productivity. The analytical tools that are part of Office 365, such as MyAnalytics, help with this.'

It benefits IT security too. 'Our physical protection is very strictly regulated in accordance with international legislation, but our IT systems were a bit behind on that front,' continues Putman. 'But we've more than made up for lost ground now.'

CHOOSING A GOOD PARTNER

There are ten people in the IT team at DP World Antwerp, which is relatively small for a company with almost 800 employees. And that's why the people at DP World Antwerp are so particular and demanding when it comes to selecting the right IT partners. 'It's very important to choose a good IT partner,' asserts Putman, 'but you also need to go about it in the right way. Companies need to stop telling their partner what has to be done, and instead ask for solutions.'

Putman believes the relationship between customer and IT partner is changing: 'We've worked together with Realdolmen in the past, but always in a project context. When the project was over, it always went quiet again. But now we've got them on board to help with our switch to the cloud, and that requires a different form of collaboration. We're learning a lot from them, including about what companies in other sectors do. And we're relying on them to guide us through the ever-changing Microsoft landscape. We of course continue to appreciate their skill, sharp focus and effective approach.'



DON'T THINK IN BOXES

Choosing a partner he can trust with his organisation's ongoing IT concerns leaves Putman's hands free to look ahead to the future. 'There's no concrete plan for a long-term approach like this', he says. 'You need to have a good look at what's going on around you and be inspired by what you find. And definitely not think inside the boxes.'

The current system being used by truckers coming to load or unload containers is a great example of this. 'It's actually a system for limiting queueing at counters, such as in banks or post offices, for example,' says the CIO. 'I once saw a demonstration of this system by its American manufacturer at a previous workplace. So I thought about it when we were looking for a solution for our terminal, and then we tested and installed it. It's saved us a lot of time and resources.'

DISRUPTIVE UPHEAVAL

Ensuring this his colleagues can work together optimally is important, but the CIO mainly wants to prepare for the challenges that DP World Antwerp is going face over the next ten to twenty years.

'We want to digitise terminal operations further to begin with,' explains Putman. 'A lot is already available digitally, but the lorry drivers are still using badges to identify themselves, for example, even though they all have a smartphone. So there's still a lot that we can implement in more detail.'



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PATRICK PUTMAN, CIO DP WORLD ANTWERP

That's only small fry compared with what Putman has in mind for the next phase, however. When this project's finished, it will cause nothing less than a revolution in the world of goods transport. 'It's actually all about collaboration again,' he explains, 'but not just internally anymore. We also want share information with our customers and other relevant parties, so we can create a data flow that the right people with the right tools can tap into. Not only will the physical transport of goods be a crucial part of our business; so will all the associated information. I strongly believe this will be pretty disruptive.'

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PATRICK PUTMAN, CIO DP WORLD ANTWERP