Altran

Altran wanted to deploy an authentication gateway without the cost and complexity of setting up internal infrastructure. It chose a solution based on SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server virtual servers running on Microsoft Azure. The Azure cloud provided secure, high-availability support for Altran’s virtual servers—complementing the built-in capabilities of SUSE Linux Enterprise Server and giving the company the ability to scale its environment up or down in a flexible and highly cost-effective manner.

Overview
A leading global engineering consulting company, Altran specializes in helping customers in the aerospace, automotive, energy, railways, finance, healthcare and telecom industries with innovation and high-tech projects. Headquartered in France, it operates in more than 20 countries across Europe, Asia and the Americas.

Challenge
Altran has approximately 550 employees in the Nordic region, most of them consultants. Assigning the right consultants to each project—based on their skills and experience—is critical to ensuring successful outcomes. To give its sales and client management teams a clear, up-to-date picture of each consultant’s skills and experience, Altran requires them to maintain a detailed electronic résumé.

Ivar Lyse, Business Manager at Altran, said: “We are a business that deals primarily in ideas and other intellectual property, so naturally our consultants are our most important asset. We had built an application to store all résumés, enabling them to edit their own data and client managers to search for the appropriate skills, and we wanted to protect this with an access management solution.”

For this résumé application in the Nordics, Altran wanted a platform that was highly flexible and scalable as well as quick and easy to set up and maintain.

Solution
Altran chose Access Manager from Micro Focus to provide web-based authentication for users. The plan was to hook the solution to Altran’s existing Microsoft Active directory landscape.

“‘When we saw that SUSE Linux Enterprise Server images were available on Azure, we never considered any other option.’”

IVAR LYSE
Business Manager
Altran

Altran at a Glance:
A global leader in innovation and high-tech engineering consulting, Altran helps its international clients to create and develop new products and services across aerospace, automotive, energy, railways, finance, healthcare and telecoms.

Industry and Location
Professional Business Services, Norway

Products and Services
SUSE Linux Enterprise Server
Microsoft Azure

Results
+ Gained a flexible, highly available and secure platform
+ Enabled low-touch management and systems administration
+ Achieved scalability at low total cost of ownership
"Putting the solution on Azure removed a whole layer of complexity and cost."

IVAR LYSE  
Business Manager  
Altran

Altran set up several Microsoft Azure Virtual Machines running SUSE Linux Enterprise Server: one as the access gateway, one as the identity provider and one as the administration console. This cloud environment runs the Access Manager portion of the résumé application.

“The initial set-up was very simple: we just selected the virtual CPU, memory and disk resources we needed for each Azure Virtual Machine, and then installed the SUSE Linux Enterprise Server image,” said Ivar Lyse. “We then downloaded and installed the ISO for Access Manager and got started. The IT team was involved in the project and helped us to connect the new Access Manager environment with Active Directory Federation Services (ADFS).”

With its access management solution running on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server on Microsoft Azure, Altran benefits from flexible monthly pricing based on its usage of virtual computing resources and the ability to scale the solution up or down as required.

“Keeping the operating system updated is simple: we just accept the standard patches that come through the SUSE update channel, exactly as if the servers were running in-house,” said Ivar Lyse. “With Azure, it’s very easy to access and manage our virtual environments; for example, there’s no need set up a VPN.”

Results
Running on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server in the Azure cloud gives Altran what it wanted: a fully flexible, highly available platform for providing round-the-clock access to its résumé application. And the seamless integration of the SUSE operating system with Microsoft Azure results in an easily managed cloud environment. Employees are securely authenticated by Access Manager, and a free-text search within the application makes it simple for client managers to find the right people for each client requirement.

“Putting the solution on Azure removed a whole layer of complexity and cost,” said Ivar Lyse. “We didn’t need to invest in our own dedicated server hardware, and we can easily and cost-effectively scale up the solution. For example, we plan to move to a clustered environment in the future to make the service even more robust, and this is simple to set up in Azure.”

Avoiding the in-house route also removed the burden of firewall and server administration. This allowed Altran to focus on the application rather than the underlying infrastructure.

“The Azure management console provides an intuitive visual overview of the status and health of our servers, so the environment is easy to manage,” said Ivar Lyse. “We could have chosen another platform to run Access Manager, but we were confident that SUSE Linux Enterprise Server would offer greater stability and availability. Our experience so far certainly confirms this to be the case.”