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Mainlining IT efficiency

Polish gas transmission operator GAZ-SYSTEM S.A activates the Intel® vPro™ platform to enhance productivity, security, and manageability.

GAZ-SYSTEM transports gas throughout Poland via the transmission network, supplying distribution networks and final customers. The enterprise is constantly changing, so its IT teams must keep on top of business shifts and be able to seamlessly update their systems across different locations. After working with Intel for a number of years, GAZ-SYSTEM rolled out full Intel® vPro™ platform activation across 2,500 machines, many powered by 4th generation Intel® Core™ i5 and i7 vPro™ processors, to enable remote management. This has improved computing availability and overall workforce efficiency.

Challenges

- **Traveling far.** The IT team struggled to fix most IT problems remotely so, with seven main offices across Poland, it was not uncommon for IT staff to have to travel 50 to 100km to fix one IT issue.
- **Power up.** GAZ-SYSTEM needed to be able to power up machines remotely if they were switched off, so they could be updated with new software or business data.
- **Remote access.** IT helpdesk staff needed to be able to access machines in different offices to resolve IT problems quickly, as they were flagged.

Solutions

- **Full Activation.** GAZ-SYSTEM activated the Intel vPro platform across 2,500 machines so the company's IT team can remotely manage and update machines, even when they are switched off.
- **Upgraded hardware.** GAZ-SYSTEM is updating its older machines to new hardware featuring the 4th generation Intel Core i5 vPro processor, enhancing security and enabling efficient remote management.

Technology Results

- **Remote management.** GAZ-SYSTEM's IT team can remotely power up, reboot, update and manage machines across offices nationwide, thanks to Intel vPro technology and Microsoft System Center 2012 Configuration Manager* (SCCM*).
- **Fail-safe support.** Intel® Active Management Technology (Intel® AMT) runs at the hardware level, allowing remote access even in the case of a total system failure or when there is no operating system installed.
- **Secure computing.** Intel AMT has built-in authentication and encryption functions to protect device data. The Intel® System Defense Utility proactively blocks any transmissions from infected PCs.

Business Value

- **Night updates.** Being able to turn machines on and off remotely means that the IT team can run updates at night in big batches to save time and energy and ensure IT security, while minimizing disruptions for normal worker computing operations.
- **Time saved.** According to their internal tests, the IT team can save the equivalent of several days per month with effective remote management of the machines and also avoid the rework associated with machines being updated manually.
- **Happy workforce.** IT staff on the helpdesk can work more efficiently and are more content since they can work remotely rather than traveling across the country to resolve issues.

"Our IT division is based in our main office, but different specialties are split across the country, so remote management is vital to keep up all internal clients concurrently. Intel® vPro™ technology has revolutionized our IT teams' work, as they can fix problems quickly and without having to physically examine the problem PC."

Adam Zając,
vPro Project Manager,
GAZ-SYSTEM

Productivity boost

Now wholly owned by the State Treasury of Poland, GAZ-SYSTEM is a nationwide public company that runs Poland's natural gas lines. The IT team is 60 strong and has an ongoing PC refresh strategy, buying 500 new PCs a year in a bid to update the company's IT suite to latest generation for optimal performance and security. However, this leaves them with a disparate device base to manage, which was challenging.

GAZ-SYSTEM mainly uses desktop PCs, and some notebooks, for standard office-based work, including word processing, email management and database configuration. It needed to reduce the cost of diagnosing and repairing machines and time spent running routine updates. "My primary aim was to improve productivity by

enabling updates to be run at night so that employees would not be interrupted by IT issues during working time," said Zając, the project manager. "I wanted to increase workforce efficiency, saving time and resources thanks to automated processes and reliable IT solutions. Another goal was to enhance staff morale by giving them a better digital environment to work in."

Remote management

Due to the decentralized company structure, it was crucial for the IT team to be able to manage machines remotely to maintain standard levels of software upgrade across all devices. GAZ-SYSTEM wanted a fully integrated remote management system and a state-of-the-art management tool for its entire client base.

GAZ-SYSTEM is the first public company to do full activation of the state-of-the-art Intel® vPro™ platform in Poland

Intel® technology was an obvious and optimal choice for GAZ-SYSTEM because it runs at a very high level regardless of the device manufacturer. The IT team was also looking for support for security management and consistency with the current environment. Since GAZ-SYSTEM is a public company, it needs to remain brand agnostic, using a mix of OEMs. Intel vPro technology works across different client types, so GAZ-SYSTEM can use the same management tool without encountering viability issues.

To improve productivity, GAZ-SYSTEM rolled out full Intel vPro platform activation across 2,500 machines. It invested in new devices powered by high-performance 4th generation Intel Core i5 and i7 vPro processors and also to take advantage of the built-in hardware-enhanced security and remote management capabilities.

"I wanted the IT team to run remote diagnostics freely and easily. We needed to upgrade software systems across departments as employees often require different software installed depending on their projects. Since we have six branches across the country as well as our head office, it was clear that managing these tasks remotely would be most efficient. Investing in activating Intel vPro technology has saved us a good deal of time and money," commented Zając.

"The latest machines have enhanced KVM Remote Control, multitasking processing and improved performance when processing demanding workloads thanks to Intel® Hyper-Threading Technology (Intel® HT Technology). These were all big positives for us. We find KVM Remote Control especially useful, since we can help employees in other offices when they have IT problems and use the remote on/off management to run nighttime software upgrades."

Life on the helpdesk

Tomasz Baran has been at GAZ-SYSTEM for four years and is part of the team that troubleshoots IT issues. He works in the IT team as IT helpdesk specialist, second level. When he started, working on the first level, he mostly worked in the call center picking up IT complaints and helping users over the phone. He came across many simple problems, such as a user failing to log into their operating system, email not working, and networks becoming unavailable. Big issues, where basic assistance did not work, he passed to the second level of technical support. A member of the support team would go to fix the problem at the source.

Although the IT team used remote technologies like TeamViewer* and DameWare*, for a problem with the operating system or driver they only had the tools to fix it at the site. For example, they might need to physically reboot the system or reinstall the driver. Baran now works on the second level where, after the problem is identified over the phone, he and his colleagues usually needed to visit the problematic PC and check the cables and connections to resolve the issue.

Until recently, Baran found many elements of his job frustrating: "I felt like I was always losing time because I spent so much of my working day traveling to fix IT issues. These were often quite straightforward, and we frequently had to fix the same problem across many machines. For instance, when we ran a new update or software upgrade, the same user issues often cropped up. This was just a waste of time. Last year, we made 1,600 visits to resolve IT problems and we estimate that half of them could have been resolved using Intel vPro technology, which we hadn't yet implemented. In practice, that works out to about 15 journeys made by each IT service worker to our remote branch offices every month."

"With Intel vPro technology, my working day is completely different. The way my colleagues and I work has changed, as we can now fix even deep system problems via KVM Remote Control. Since the activation, the way we can solve IT issues is different, because Intel vPro technology is not dependent on the operating system, so it can be down but we can still remotely fix the PC. The time it takes to fix problems now is on average 30 minutes, where it used to be more like four hours due to travel time. Of course, this was also time out of that employee's day, so cutting time spent fixing IT issues has improved productivity across the board. I am much more satisfied at work now. I can spend my time effectively and fit lots of different tasks into my day. I feel like I have so much more time. Being able to run software upgrades during the night has also had a positive impact across the whole employee workforce."

Both Intel and Galaxy, a system integrator certified with being an Expert Integrator of Intel vPro Technology, worked with the IT helpdesk staff to train them in the new technology so they could take advantage of every benefit. "I found this training very useful," said Baran. "Intel ran some workshops on the Intel vPro platform activation process prior to installation, which we all really enjoyed."

Lessons Learned

Investing in new PCs powered by Intel Core i5 and i7 vPro processors has created unexpected cost benefits for GAZ-SYSTEM. Now it saves on shipping costs and other IT logistics because machines can be remotely set up with the necessary software and apps on arrival at their final destination. Previously, machines were sent to the IT helpdesk to be manually set up before being shipped to the offices. Remote management through Intel technology has streamlined many lines of work across the company.

Manifestly better

"Although currently 2,500 machines have been activated, all employees either already are or soon will feel the benefits of this Intel vPro platform activation," said Zając. "The key top-line benefit is the improvement in nationwide collaborative working thanks to faster, more efficient IT, automated processes and centralized systems. Before, GAZ-SYSTEM's IT department had to deal with different versions of Intel vPro technology within the ecosystem as well as PCs of different generations. The mix of platforms and client types made it difficult to manage. Being able to integrate all of these machines on one management platform is saving a lot of employee time. Even those who do not work on the IT desks are better off now that most IT issues can be resolved remotely and their work is not interrupted with daytime software updates. The company has cut travel costs, and been able to significantly reduce the IT budget while experiencing unprecedented productivity."

Moving forwards, GAZ-SYSTEM is continuing to invest in remote management and is especially focusing on the in-built security benefits of Intel technology, such as Intel® Active Management Technology (Intel® AMT) and Intel® Identity Protection Technologies.

Find the solution that's right for your organization. View **success stories from your peers**, learn more about **vPro for business** and check out the **IT Center**, Intel's resource for the IT Industry.

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