



Realdolmen Project Management key factor in smooth relocation of general hospital AZ Alma

How do you approach the relocation of a hospital, knowing that a hospital never closes? The management, doctors and nurses expected the IT department to ensure that all systems were fully operational when moving in. Head of ICT department Tom Decavele: “ We could not afford any delays. We simply had to succeed.” With a technical roadmap, the help of experienced system administrators and guidance from a project manager, Realdolmen helped get the job done.

Because AZ Alma appreciated Realdolmen’s project approach, which led to the required result within the predefined budget and time frame, they continued to call on Realdolmen after the relocation project. They are currently running a project for a new document management system.

NEVER MOVED A HOSPITAL BEFORE

Almost fifteen years ago, the hospitals in Eeklo and Sijsele merged into AZ Alma. After quite some time, the merger resulted in a new hospital building in Eeklo. The patients moved from the old hospital in Eeklo to the new building in March 2017. The patients of the hospital in Sijsele, which has since become a care site including an outpatient clinic of AZ Alma, were transferred shortly afterwards.

Fritz Defloor, Director of Care Support Services of AZ Alma, and Tom Decavele had never done a hospital move of this size before. “ We were able to call on hospitals that had previously relocated to a new hospital, but each move (in) has its specific elements. “There are hospitals that have also built a new building, but they stayed at the same location, for example. We did not,” Tom Decavele says. “We also have no fiber connection between our old building and the new one, which made the digital data transfer more difficult. Since IT is a crucial factor in the operation of a hospital, this project had to be ready in time. “

“ We had previously worked together successfully with Realdolmen. They could tell us what was feasible and what was not. Realdolmen’s wide range of products and services was another advantage for us. It allowed us to work with one supplier.”

TOM DECAVELE,
HEAD ICT DEPARTMENT AZ ALMA

az **alma**
zorg met een **hart**

COUNTRY: Belgium
SECTOR: Healthcare

CHALLENGE

Almost fifteen years ago, the hospitals in Eeklo and Sijsele merged into AZ Alma. For the relocation to the new hospital in Eeklo in 2017, management, doctors and nurses expected the IT department to ensure that all systems were fully operational when moving in. Such relocation was a unique experience for the AZ Alma team. Although they could call on experiences from other hospitals, each situation has its own specificities and challenges. Since IT is a crucial factor in the operation of a hospital, this project had to be ready in time.

SOLUTION

Met een technische roadmap, de hulp van ervaren systeembeheerders en sturing door een projectmanager, heeft Realdolmen de klus mee helpen klaren.

BENEFITS

- Controlled and safe relocation of all existing IT
- Flawless introduction of 45 new applications
- IT ready for the opening of the new hospital on time and within budget .



Tom Decavele, AZ Alma4

KICK-OFF ICT RELOCATION PROJECT IN 2015

The first discussions with Realdolmen were held at the beginning of 2015. “We had previously worked together successfully on Microsoft Exchange and SQL Server projects. Realdolmen has experience in the field of moving ICT infrastructure and applications. They could tell us what was feasible and what was not. Realdolmen’s wide range of products and services was another advantage for us. It allowed us to work with one supplier.”

Realdolmen’s infrastructure architect Lieven Willems initiated the project kick-off. The hospital had worked with him before and he wrote a technical roadmap for the relocation. “During the six-month period of the workshops, we mainly created an inventory of our IT infrastructure and IT applications. Lieven and AZ Alma further developed the application sheet, which is a template showing what each application does and what it needs to work properly.

That sheet was also very useful later when we started using the 45 new applications in the new building. The new building has a great deal of IT that we did not have in the old hospital, such as automated drug distribution, a digital operating theater that can send recorded images to the electronic patient archives, where they can be consulted from the electronic patient file, new scanners for medical imaging, a stock management system with RFID, access control using badges to open doors, telephony over the Wi-Fi network, handsets by five hundred beds to call the nurses and operate the IPTV, parking management systems and building management systems to regulate lighting and ventilation, and camera surveillance.



Candy De Prekel, Realdolmen and Tom Decavele, AZ Alma

On the former campuses, for instance, we had not installed a Wi-Fi network, given the relocation project. Now there is wireless network coverage everywhere with five hundred access points. In the old building, we used around 1,000 data connections. Now we have 3,500 and we can activate another 3,500. Almost everything in a modern hospital involves IT.”

“After the workshops, we had to choose between four scenarios,” Tom Decavele says. “We did not choose to move all IT at once. We wanted to migrate the most important applications before the others. From 2016, we received support from two system managers at Realdolmen for two years. They felt like members of our team, which also included seven system administrators. We and the other hospital staff made no distinction between them and the IT department. They both worked well together with our team, referred to me as their head of department, were sorry to leave at the end of 2017 and felt right at home here. The feeling was mutual.”

WHAT IS POSSIBLE AND WHO DOES WHAT WHEN?

“We first thought that we could do the job ourselves, but our IT department handles questions and issues on a daily basis, which makes it difficult to focus on one important additional project, such as a relocation. In May 2016, Project Manager Candy De Prekel of Realdolmen arrived. She checked what people could do at what times. Those people then knew what was expected of them and by when. She handled the project budgeting and organized and supervised the implementation of the plan.”

“We could not afford any unplanned outages. The migration had to happen in a controlled and secure way. Electronic patient files, the medical imaging and other vital systems had to be available 24/7. The systems are interconnected. The allowed downtime for crucial applications, such as the elec-

tronic patient files, hospital information system or PACS, is very limited. What would the storage systems, servers and network equipment do after many years of uninterrupted operation when we pulled the plug, loaded them into a truck and restarted them in one of the two new server rooms? Would there be any problems?”



The risk was lower for storage systems, because we installed new storage machines at our new building in the spring of 2016 as a technological head start. We worked with the Realdolmen Project Manager to assess the risks, create a scenario for the relocation down to each quarter of an hour and perform advance testing. This made it clear what we had to do if something went wrong.”

TWO SERVER ROOMS OPERATIONAL IN 24 HOURS

Proper preparation led to a carefree implementation. In October 2016, the most important applications such as the EPD and the hospital information system migrated one by one. On the eve of Armistice Day, AZ Alma’s ICT team and the three from Realdolmen started the migration to the first server room at the new hospital. It was completed by morning and everything was tested and operational by midday. We then started the relocation to the second server room. The entire job was done in 24 hours. On Saturday our efforts could be directed at resolving any problems rather than the migration itself.

We appreciated the approach of Realdolmen’s project manager so much that we hired her again for other projects after the success of the relocation.

WHAT WOULD AZ ALMA DO DIFFERENTLY NOW?

“If we could turn back the clock, we would hardly change a thing,” Tom Decavele says. “Realdolmen’s project approach works. We use it to further professionalize the hospital IT systems. Other departments are also interested in that approach. They came into contact with it because the management of an IT project involves the entire organization, not just the IT department.”

MORE INFORMATION?

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