



PROACT

CASE STUDY

Fortnox

Fortnox

A private cloud to drive growth and automation

Summary

Challenge

After an extended period of strong growth, business software provider Fortnox was outgrowing the data centre resources which provide its SaaS platform. They went looking for an IT infrastructure solution that is scalable, reliable and enables further automation.

Solution

Fortnox opted for a new private cloud built with on-premise infrastructure, assigning Proact to manage operations, backup and maintenance.

Key components:

- NetApp
- VMware ESX
- Juniper
- Commvault

Fortnox is a success story in the Swedish software industry. They were pioneers by introducing a web-based platform for accounting services. Success came quickly, and it has lasted.

Fortnox opened for business in 2001, long before Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) was coined as a concept, but this is actually what they have always delivered. Today, Fortnox is a listed company with over 400,000 customers who have chosen their cloud-based business services.

In recent years, the company's growth has accelerated, both by numbers and through a widening range of services. The latest additions include quotation support and assistance for setting up a new business. Most customers are small businesses, even though Sweden's leading accounting firms also work in the cloud using Fortnox.

Fortnox has driven innovation in its industry by offering software as a service where customers don't have to invest in technology or devote their energies to technology issues detached from core business.

The Fortnox IT operations team is responsible for the infrastructure that provides the services, which is best described as a private cloud. Following an extended period of stable growth, they saw the need to modernise and scale up their cloud platform. They went looking for a long-term solution that would also meet tomorrow's requirements for performance, security and functionality. The ability to handle peak loads is especially critical.

"Our customers are typically most busy at end of the month, or when they are closing their books for the year. We immediately observe that," says Peter Hall, Head of IT Operations at Fortnox.



We want a supplier that we can work closely with and with people who truly like to work in this way, and this is what we have with Proact”

Peter Hall
Head of IT Operations
Fortnox

Private or public cloud?

One option was to retire on-premise operations and migrate the entire Fortnox service platform to the public cloud. In practice, this would be a matter of choosing between a handful of the largest global cloud providers.

“We reached the conclusion that the public cloud doesn’t provide any financial benefits for us. It may look like an easy and low-cost task to migrate a couple of servers in the cloud, but we have more than 1,200 virtual machines, many with high performance requirements. If you then add large volumes of data, the bill quickly grows,” says Peter Hall, Head of IT operations at Fortnox.

Other compelling reasons for maintaining their on-premise IT operations involve compliance and legal issues. The landmark Schrems II ruling by the EU Court of Justice has created widespread uncertainty about data storage using US-controlled cloud services.

“We are often asked if we are running our own servers and where data is stored. There are some misgivings about American cloud providers which we avoid by owning our IT infrastructure. We would not have the same sense of control if we went with the public cloud,” says Peter Hall.

Given the circumstances, Fortnox has a competitive advantage in that customers can always be certain where their data is stored, and that their business applications run in a modern environment that meets the highest standards both when it comes to operational reliability and security. Customers should feel reassured about Fortnox managing their data.

The new solution

Fortnox opted for updating their on-premise environment, and to do so in collaboration with Proact. The company already had an object storage solution from Proact, which is used for archiving large volumes of customer-related documents, while also serving Fortnox’ development team.

“Proact devised an infrastructure solution that matched each one of our requirements. They also responded by asking us questions and came up with alternatives to what we had suggested, which we really appreciated. Since we already enjoyed good working relations with Proact, we were also confident about their delivery capabilities and support services,” says Peter Hall.

For the new Fortnox services platform, Proact’s solution architects designed a bespoke multicloud environment. It comprises three separate, networked data centres that provide full redundancy and enables efficient load balancing. Should one site go down, users will hardly even notice as this does not compromise performance.

Security matters

Only a select few individuals at Fortnox have access to the service platform management tools, and all customer data is encrypted. This means, for example, that Proact staff can manage storage system operations and maintenance, without having access to customer content.

The new data centre equipment is owned by Fortnox while the platform is delivered as a service by Proact. The solution is based on a combination of Proact’s managed cloud services and technology from NetApp, VMware, Juniper and Commvault.

Fortnox has selected Service Management by Proact, which includes overall responsibility for IT infrastructure operations, support and maintenance. The entire solution is covered by Proact Premium Support, which means that Proact coordinates support efforts even when multiple vendors are involved. In addition, Proact keeps key spare parts available to enable quick and independent response on service matters.



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Enabling further automation

The new environment is software-defined from the ground up, which in turn creates great opportunities for automation.

“We wanted to take the opportunity to automate even more. It’s been quite a while since we last had to manually deploy a server. And now we can set up the entire infrastructure through code,” says Peter Hall.

He sees great value in this capability. Updates and patches can be automated and the changes are practically self-documenting when implemented. Troubleshooting becomes easier as well.

“We want a supplier that we can work closely with and with people who truly like to work in this way, and this is what we have with Proact,” says Peter Hall.

Fortnox has applied the same thinking to its customer offering, with a strong commitment to driving automation and digitization for customers. They have long worked to connect government entities, banks and other software suppliers through the Fortnox platform, enabling seamless workflows that relieve customers. Fortnox has also been an early adopter of AI and automation into their R&D, which has already yielded results in the form of new products.

Fortnox has enjoyed strong growth for a long time, and predictions for the future are equally positive. One of the business targets named by the Board of Directors is to reach 700,000 customers by 2025. Backed by its scalable cloud platform, the company is well set to achieve this.



Three interconnected data centres provide stable performance and exceptional operational reliability, with additional data protection through Backup-as-a-Service by Proact.



Scalable platform where capacity can be expanded as needed. Fortnox plans to double the number of customers over a five-year period.



Fortnox retains full control over its IT infrastructure and can guarantee customers that their data is located in Sweden.



Software-defined architecture enables advanced automation.

About Fortnox

A market leader in Sweden, Fortnox provides a cloud-based service platform enabling businesses and accounting agencies to efficiently manage finance and administration. Founded in 2001, Fortnox is headquartered in Växjö, Sweden and the company share is listed on NGM Nordic SME. For further information, please visit www.fortnox.se.

About Proact

Proact is Europe’s leading independent data centre and cloud services provider. By delivering flexible, accessible and IT solutions and services, we help companies and authorities reduce risk and costs, whilst increasing agility, productivity and efficiency.

We’ve completed over 5,000 successful projects around the world, have more than 3,500 customers and currently manage in excess of 100 petabytes of information in the cloud. We employ over 800 people in 13 countries across Europe and North America. Founded in 1994, our parent company, Proact IT Group AB (publ), was listed on Nasdaq Stockholm in 1999 (under the symbol PACT).

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