

“IT’S MORE THAN JUST A PRODUCT THAT HAS BROUGHT US TOGETHER.”

When Luxembourg’s national Internet Exchange Point LU-CIX needed a new rack infrastructure at the start of 2020 to respond to the increase in activity, it quickly turned to Legrand Data Center Solutions and the new Nexpanse range from its subsidiary Minkels. An interview with Michel Lanners, CIO of LU-CIX.

A DRIVE FOR CHANGE

Riding the information superhighway, LU-CIX has been successfully blazing its own trail for over ten years. Thanks to its 264 Gb/s bandwidth speeds, an ever-increasing number of members, and recognition from authorities for its importance to Luxembourg’s economy, the LU-CIX platform is now a major stakeholder in the country’s IT infrastructure. More than 80% of Luxembourg’s online traffic is routed through the LU-CIX national network, connecting almost all of country’s Internet providers!

The platform’s reputation is even higher amongst industry professionals with LU-CIX organising the Luxembourg Internet Days, an event held over

several days in November every year. This major event takes place throughout Greater Luxembourg, allowing businesses to show off their innovative products and solutions and giving well-known personalities a chance to share their experiences and vision as part of conferences and round-table meetings in a pragmatic and technical approach.

In order to respond to demand and maintain a premium quality of service, LU-CIX’s six (suggest capital POP) points of presence (PoPs) in Luxembourg must adapt. At the start of this year, the organisation’s Executive Board decided to reinforce the Battenbourg data centre’s capacities by scheduling the installation of a private cage. All that was left to do was choose the right partner for the job.

“We had obviously heard of Legrand Data Center Solutions and Minkels before,” explains Michel Lanners, CIO of LU-CIX. “Their products have an excellent reputation amongst our members and Luxembourg’s IT community. Legrand Data Center Solutions also regularly take part in the Luxembourg Internet Days to show off their new solutions, so we’ve been in relatively close contact with them for a while. Naturally, we contacted them for our expansion project.”

ONE STEP AT A TIME

Michel Lanners continues: “When it comes to choosing equipment, we weren’t just going to go off a catalogue or a website, however well put together they were. You could say that’s somewhat of a paradox for an organisation that works in digital technology. Wrong! It was crucial to see the rack, to touch it, handle it, get an idea of the volume, the mass, the material, the quality ...

Before making our decision, we arranged a configuration session at Legrand in February 2020. Lasting more than four hours, we met with their experts, who presented the Nexpanse racks and their numerous options. We were able to hold a discussion, exchange ideas and challenge these ideas to ultimately determine the solution that would fit us best. We inspected everything in great detail: the resistance of the shelves, the opening and closing of the doors, the adjustment of the vertical supports ... If needed, a rack must be able to be reconfigured easily.

Finally, we narrowed it down to two rack configurations which would allow us to take advantage of the “factory pre-

assembled” service. This was a huge plus that would allow us to significantly reduce installation time and avoid any potential labour or adjustment surcharges as part of on-site assembly.

This meeting was a key moment, a real turning point. Leaving the showroom, we felt confident that we had been heard and understood, and we were sure that we had the solution we needed.”

SUSTAINABILITY OR NOTHING

This visit was just one of the many steps in the selection process. In an age where we are often reminded about the pollution generated by data centre activity, the question of sustainability is becoming more and more important. “That’s right. There were two deciding elements when it came to sustainability,” explains Michel Lanners. “The first is the recommendation of Legrand to go for a closed cold-aisle infrastructure; a configuration which consumes less energy. This suggestion allowed us to focus our search towards a certain type of rack and confirm our choice of provider. The second element is linked to our desire to favour European production. The social (employment-

related support) and environmental (shorter channels) aspects of local production were extremely important to us. Legrand provided us with all the relevant guarantees in this regard.”

THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

The equipment was ordered in the middle of March, just as Luxembourg was entering lockdown. This was an uncertain period, but it did not prevent all those involved from coordinating and planning the execution of the project as best they could. “I must commend the perfect cohesion between Legrand, the installer CEL and distributor, Kannegieter in particular. Luck was on our side as the installation coincided exactly with the first phase of lockdown lifting, making things easier,” explains Michel Lanners. “Now that everything is up and running, the results are positive across the board. We are completely satisfied with the equipment, but, beyond that, I’ve also made a quality relationship.

It’s more than just a product that has brought us together.” ■

