

PROACT

conoa
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CASE STUDY



AFA Insurance

Going from a month to an hour



Summary

Challenge

AFA Insurance saw a great need for modernising its enterprise application platform. A new strategy was adopted for establishing a service-based IT architecture.

Solution

AFA Insurance will transfer all software development to a container-based platform. This facilitates agile practises where changes that previously took a month instead can be made within an hour. The new platform also enables a smooth transition to a hybrid environment where on-premise resources can be freely mixed with cloud services.

When AFA Insurance modernises its IT from the ground up, application development can be accelerated dramatically. Moving enterprise applications to a container-based platform makes the goal within reach.

AFA Insurance is owned by the main parties in the Swedish labour market. Its mission is to administer the occupational injury insurance stipulated in collective agreements. More than four million people are covered by the AFA insurance policies, which provide financial support in the event of incapacity for work.

AFA has on-premises data centres and also a sizeable in-house software development, with a team of around 70 employees.

Five-year plan sets the direction for the future

The key enterprise applications have evolved over many years. In 2019, AFA Insurance launched a new IT strategy that sets the direction for the future:

“We have a five-year plan for making the transition from ‘producing to consuming’ IT,” says Patrik Grönlund, head of IT infrastructure and operations at AFA Insurance.

This opens up the possibility to use more services, systems and applications from external providers. At the same time, AFA will update its existing enterprise systems, both through new development projects and gradual adaptation of legacy applications.



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Patrik Grönlund
Head of IT Infrastructure and Operations
AFA Insurance

Conoa's contribution

- Container platform design and implementation
- Application onboarding support
- Training for AFA management, operations and development teams
- Rancher - container management tool
- Hashicorp Vault - security tool

“During the first two years, we have done the groundwork and established a development platform that Conoa has helped us set up. They have the right expertise on container technology and have done this kind of transition before. Now we have our future technology foundation in place, says Patrik Grönlund.

Over the following three years, much of the modernisation of AFA's enterprise applications will be realised, and by the end of the period, all business-critical elements will be containerised. Rewriting parts of the code is a prerequisite for modernisation. The existing monolithic applications need to be broken down to adapt to the services-based architecture of the future. This makes it easy to migrate workloads between AFA's data centres. Cloud migration will essentially become equally simple, although AFA currently has no significant presence in the cloud.

“We will consume cloud services in the future. There are no plans set for an all-out cloud migration, but we have envisioned some form of hybrid model. What's important now is facilitating this,” says Patrik Grönlund.

Enabling automation and changing ways of working

A key benefit from the new container-based platform is more efficient and faster development. Historically, it has taken an average of 30 days from starting development until new code is deployed.

“Using modern infrastructure that enables automation and new ways of working, we should be able to make a corresponding change in an application in less than an hour. And that's what our motto for the transition says: 'Going from a month to an hour,’” says Patrik Grönlund.

Conoa has led training sessions on container technology and DevOps with AFA in which company management has also participated. The development and IT operations teams have engaged in technical training on containerisation and Kubernetes. Furthermore, AFA has established a DevOps Excellence Centre to define the new development platform and then provide support to development teams so that everyone can use the platform.

Andreas Holmström at AFA Insurance is a DevOps and Infrastructure Specialist. His work within the Excellence Centre has included making guidelines for integrating parts of the existing enterprise applications and adapting them to the modern platform. Container technology makes it easier to reuse code and thus avoid duplication of tasks, but for it to succeed in practice, everyone needs to work the same way.

“We began by establishing best practises and developed new AFA methodology for future development projects. The main idea is to use standardised working procedures as far as possible. We are then introducing these to all our teams. The overall objective is to 'make it easy to do it right,’” says Andreas Holmström.

Faster development and shorter lead times

In addition to productivity gains, including faster development and shorter lead times, container technology also offers benefits through greater flexibility and improved quality.

“We get a more manageable infrastructure. It will be easier to scale out, not only in terms of capacity but from a functional perspective as well. With code-based infrastructure, we also get traceability,” says Andreas Holmström.

In the past, it was difficult to see what changes were made, by whom and why. It also becomes easier to apply dual control for quality assurance, where a developer routinely enlists a colleague for final review of new code.



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Patrik Grönlund
Head of IT Infrastructure and Operations
AFA Insurance

Implementing containers and DevOps not only involves technology changes. For AFA Insurance, it is also about adopting new ways of working and forming a new culture that the entire IT team can embrace.

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Benefits:



Enables service-based IT delivery



Raised developer productivity



Easy to migrate workloads between on-premises data centres and/or the Cloud.



Better traceability through self-documenting code



Radically faster development / shorter time to market

About AFA Insurance

AFA Insurance is an organisation which, based on collective agreements, provides financial support to private sector and public employees in the event of incapacity for work due to sickness, work injury, shortage of work, death or parental leave. More than 4.7 million people are covered by at least one AFA insurance plan. AFA is a non-profit organisation with assets under management totalling about 200 billion Swedish kronor. An important part of its mission is supporting research and projects which actively contribute to improving work environments. AFA Insurance has some 650 employees and is owned by the Sweden's major labour market parties. www.afaforsakring.se

About Proact

Proact is Europe's leading specialist in data and information management with focus on cloud services and data centre solutions. We help our customers to store, connect, protect, secure and drive value through their data whilst increasing agility, productivity and efficiency.

We've completed thousands of successful projects around the world, have more than 4,000 customers and currently manage hundreds of petabytes of information in the cloud. We employ over 1,000 people in 15 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).

The Kubernetes, Cloud Native, and container technology experts Conoa was acquired by Proact 2021.

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