



All together now



How UBS's innovative hub helped 60,000 work remotely with virtually no downtime during the pandemic – interview with Nej Adamian, head of digital engineering, UBS Group Technology.

Last year, 95% of your organisation started working from home, almost overnight, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. What were the challenges of doing this?

Remote work was already an integral part of UBS's way of working before Covid-19 so we had all processes and systems in place. When the pandemic struck, past investments paid off as we were on the last mile to implement what we call "A3" – anytime, anywhere, with any device. We accelerated the closure of implementation of A3 and provided a secure and fast infrastructure for remote working for over 95% of our staff via our "My Hub External" website.

Working from home as a mass experience had of course a substantial impact on our systems. For example, we have about 60,000 people working remotely at the same time, making about three million calls globally each week. Our systems remained stable and resilient. We even saw record stability in some of those months.

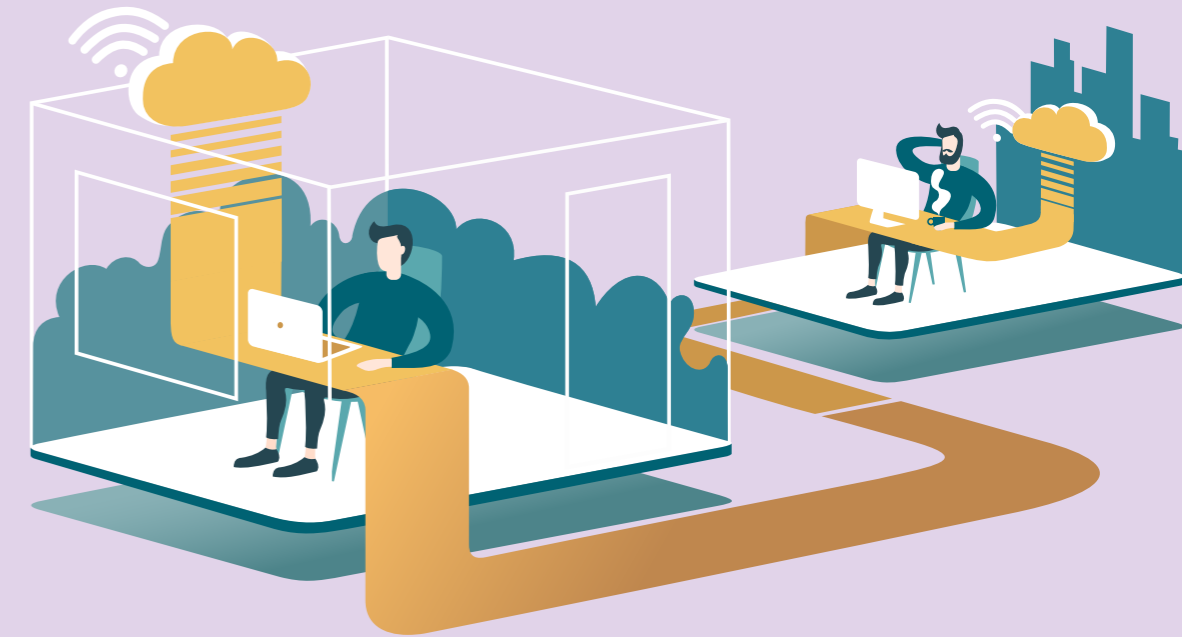
When we shifted to working

from home, it was during a time of high volumes and volatility in our financial markets. Thanks to the stability of our IT, we successfully managed March's high volumes and activity across our trading and client platforms enabling us to gain market share and share of wallet with our clients in the first quarter of 2020.

What is UBS's My Hub External. What tech does it use?

My Hub External is a website we developed for our 70,000+ employees who work all over the world. Its purpose is to allow employees to access the tools they need while they are all working remotely. For example, if an employee is locked out of their account because they've forgotten their password, the My Hub helps them reset their account securely. They can do this without having to call an IT helpdesk or needing access to the bank's secure network.

The site also has diagnostic tools which can detect whether an employee is having technical issues with their computer, such as if software needs updating. The tools meant that we have



experienced very little IT downtime during remote working, meaning colleagues could spend more time on clients during the pandemic.

The hub's technology leverages several services within Microsoft's Azure Cloud including: Azure Functions, Key Vault, SQL Database, WebApps and application insights. The hub also uses proprietary technology developed in house by our UBS Digital Engineering team.

How did you adapt the My Hub External to support the surge in remote working?

Pre-Covid, the site was a concept under development as part of a suite of services. When it became clear that most of UBS had to start working remotely, we immediately accelerated the development of the tool.

The speed of deployment was the biggest challenge. We were able to roll it out quickly by using cloud technologies.

We worked to make sure that the tool was as simple to use as possible. We had to consider design of the service to meet massive spikes in demand during peak times – which the cloud is perfect compared against on-premise alternatives. As we built the product natively in the cloud, we adopted our testing strategy accordingly – to ensure that it

is secure and compliant with regulations.

Alongside the hub, we also provided support and training for our employees to help them work from home, including an app for mental health.

What have been the main benefits of My Hub External?

My Hub External is built for remote working. The hub's benefits include, being a single page that gives users an overview of their remote working capabilities and health of their personal devices based on UBS standards and enabling users to self-service their IT and other needs.

Has the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation among financial services, including desktop technologies and remote working?

The pandemic has increased digital savviness in general. Every

aspect of private and business lives was impacted – shopping, chatting, banking. According to several surveys, the pandemic has accelerated digitalisation by three to four years. We expect this trend to continue and see a boost especially for automation and technological capability (stability, cloud, remote working), digitalisation on the client side and working from home after the pandemic as more employees will want to work partially and more flexible from home.

Do you plan to develop the hub over the coming year?

As with any digital product, the tool is constantly being improved for performance and design and is having new features and capabilities added. As remote working appears to be part of the "new normal" around the world, the tool will be here to support our employees.



"The cloud is an essential part of our strategy. Our work on My Hub is a perfect example – our ability to seamlessly pivot to remote working helped UBS colleagues focus on delivering throughout the pandemic."

Mike Dargan, group chief information officer, UBS