



SARP Group, subsidiary of Veolia, digitally transforms operations with Remote Visual Assistance

Remote collaboration and visual assistance optimise operations and customer service

Case study
SARP Group

MARKET: INDUSTRY
DEPLOYED IN: 2021

COUNTRY: FRANCE
USERS: 6500

COMPANY:
SARP GROUP

Alcatel • Lucent 
Enterprise

The Operations 4.0 project: Optimising resource management and customer service

"The genesis of the project was based on a simple observation: 15% of on-site customer work was not initially carried out because operators did not have the information they needed or the support of specialists at the right time to complete the work", says Claire Dechelotte, Head of Innovative and Digital Projects at the SARP Group's Technical and Innovation Department. "This lack of information was a real source of frustration, and it wasted time, and energy. The goal was to optimise the field operators' time and make their day-to-day lives easier."

In 2017, the SARP Group launched a transformation program called "Operations 4.0", with a goal to acquire innovative digital tools to optimise response times and resources. The project was part of a broader process of digitising operations.

The goal of the project was to facilitate collaboration and make day-to-day work as flexible and as straightforward as possible for:

- Operators who work in the field to perform services based on their speciality (for example; sanitation, cleaning, TV inspection)
- Operations managers, in charge of planning, coordinating, supporting and optimising the field teams' work
- Technical sales representatives during site visits

A robust and flexible communications solution to enable real-time collaboration

A simple solution was needed to optimise communications between field operators and operations managers using real-time audio and video sharing. The solution was also intended to increase the real-time intervention of experts to support operators who require assistance.

Technical and practical constraints

The work performed by sanitation and industrial maintenance professionals can include significant constraints. Collaborative solutions must not impede the activity or safety of field operators while working.

SARP GROUP

The SARP Group has extensive experience in the fields of sanitation, industrial maintenance, and special waste collection for sustainable development. The SARP network offers a comprehensive range of high-quality local services in sanitation and hygiene activities including; liquid waste management, maintenance and refurbishment of pipes for communities, the management of unwanted substances, industrial maintenance and also TV inspection of pipe equipment.

The SARP Group employs more than 6500 people at more than 200 sites in France.

For more information, please visit the website: <https://www.sarp-assainissement.fr/groupe-sarp/>

“ Our goal is to become the reference in environmental maintenance. ”

CLAIRE DECHELOTTE, HEAD OF INNOVATIVE AND DIGITAL PROJECTS, TECHNICAL AND INNOVATION DEPARTMENT, SARP GROUP.

When a field operator works with a hydro-cleaner, for example, they have to carry out specific, delicate work. Any additional equipment must not impede the performance of operations. As a result, connected glasses were quickly ruled out, as they are incompatible with certain activities that may be dirty. As well, they can make protective glasses uncomfortable to wear, and can create challenges when concentrating on difficult activities, or even isolate workers from outside alerts, creating a source of danger.

The decision was made to go with smartphones. However, agents cannot touch devices other than those used for their job while they work. They needed to be able to operate the phone or share videos while working, but without touching the smartphone.

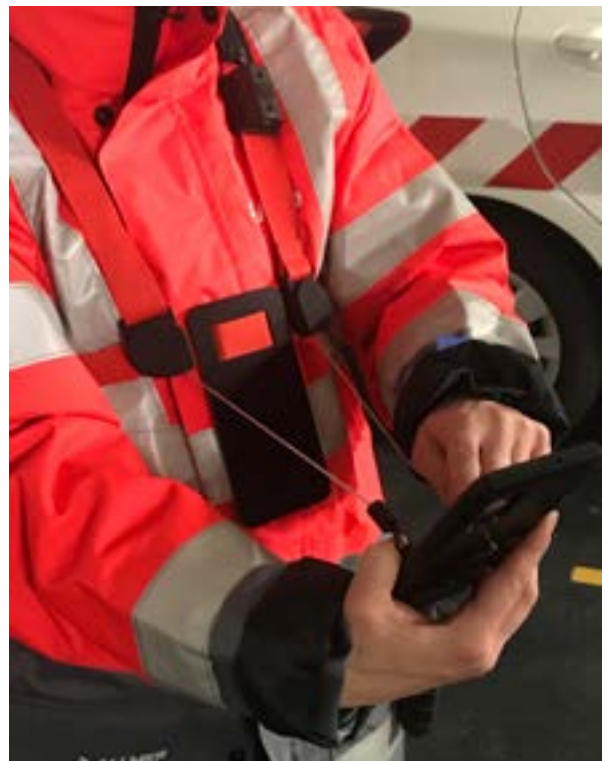
In the end, a solution with the following elements was selected:

- A smartphone, easily adaptable to the constraints mentioned above; offering good quality video and audio sharing features, using high-performance microphones and cameras, to allow for clear TV inspection
- A harness to secure the phone, while at the same time making it accessible when needed, such as to view a document
- A button to control the phone
- A pair of over-ear headphones that allows outside sounds to get through

The Remote Visual Assistance application, developed for operators, has made it possible to achieve these goals and to create a packaged solution. To facilitate operators and operations manager working together the company did not want to redevelop an application from scratch, but rather, an existing robust and innovative solution. A solution that guaranteed the durability of its functions and a high level of security. The solution selected to deliver the functions was Rainbow™ by Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise.

Rainbow's main features met the SARP Group needs with:

- Simplified visual communication between the operators and the experts, allowing the expert to see what the operator sees
- Simplicity to search and add an available expert in a collaboration bubble
- Collection, transfer and storage of photos/videos taken by operators



Trust in Rainbow by Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise and the vendor teams' expertise was key

Although the SARP Group was equipped with Google Suite the decision ultimately went in favor of Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise. At the time of the project launch, the Google Meet platform was in its infancy and was unable to provide a clear view of its features evolution.

"The big challenge was to find a trustworthy partner with whom we could work over time, in terms of support and approach," says Claire Dechelotte. "Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise had a large customer base, a robust platform, advanced features, proximity that allowed roadmap discussions, guaranteed features over time, and that's why we chose to work with them."

Rainbow by Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise was the right choice to meet these needs with:

- A rich customer portfolio
- A robust platform
- Attractive rates
- Functionality consistent with the needs of the project over the long-term
- A clear view of the evolution of the functions over the long-term
- Proximity to the Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise teams, and especially to the people who were developing the back office

Simplified functions for minimal hands-on requirements

- Field operators can take a picture in a single click
- They can record a video in a single click
- A double-click starts a Rainbow conversation (bubble) between the operator and the operations managers. The operator's video camera is automatically activated and can be seen in real-time by the operator, who will see exactly what the operator sees as they are working.

Long-term trust, proximity, and visibility - key arguments

"It was, above all, the proximity to the teams who were developing the back office, the discussions on the roadmap, and the guarantee of the durability of the functions that made the difference," says Claire Dechelotte.

SARP and Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise, a promising long-term partnership

In the partnership with SARP, Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise has demonstrated:

- Undeniable quality of service
- Synergistic working across all developments in recent years
- A robust and functional platform, with limited malfunctions in the back office

The SARP Group's goal is to continue to work together to ensure this partnership and the platform remain sustainable and even strengthened.

“ At the beginning it was a small project, a POC (proof of concept), an experiment, but thanks to the proximity of the Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise teams, we have evolved and today we are considering marketing the solution. A mutually beneficial partnership, to make our joint projects a success. ”

CLAIRE DECHELOTTE, HEAD OF INNOVATIVE AND DIGITAL PROJECTS, TECHNICAL AND INNOVATION DEPARTMENT



Results exceed expectations

The results have proven to be remarkable since the deployment of the solution, most importantly for capitalising on interventions.

One of the first results noted was the reduction of incomplete work, as Claire Dechelotte explains: *"We have noticed that the number of incomplete jobs is down by two-thirds, which has allowed us to optimise interventions and increase customer satisfaction."*

Time savings for back office employees was also quickly identified as a benefit, especially for operations managers, Claire reports *"a saving of 30 minutes per day, per person."* This qualitative time saving was made possible by the transfer, time-stamping and automatic geolocation of photos and videos collected by the operators, even without an internet connection. This device may even allow the data to be used for a bailiff's report.

Time saved was further enhanced with the automation of image processing and storage. The use of images is key to the SARP Group's operations as it allows for faster response and resolution, as well as dispute resolution.

"This work has had a huge impact on the teams in the field and has freed up time for quality work," says Claire. *"On the first project where we used the application, we saved 5 to 6 hours of work, a significant gain."*

Better quality quotes, improved customer service

In addition to the original objectives, which have clearly been achieved, other improvements have been identified.

Initially designed specifically for operators, Remote Visual Assistance has proven to be beneficial in collaborating and complementing other jobs, such as sales, especially in costing interventions and identifying future problems.

Rainbow's video capabilities simplify communications and visual assistance between teams, improving the quality of work for everyone. For example; the ability to record inspections; debriefing with operations managers; and more qualitative quotes produced by the sales staff; all while simultaneously enabling sites to be better prepared for operators and even help in the prevention of certain problems.

SARP has also benefited from an improved brand image, to that of a well-equipped, solid and collaborative group. This offers advantages to customer relations, as customers experience improved teamwork. The resolution of problems upon the initial intervention has also had clear benefits for customer service.

CONSTRAINTS

- Support collaboration between field operators and operation managers during field interventions,, to reduce the number of abandoned jobs
- Significant technical constraints regarding the safety of operators during interventions, as well as practicality and compatibility with existing tools
- A trustworthy partner willing to be involved in terms of support and approach

PRODUCTS

- Rainbow by Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise
- Remote Visual Assistance by Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise

SOLUTIONS

- Collaboration

BENEFITS

- Remote visual assistance has made it possible to reduce the number incomplete interventions, by two-thirds and to save 30 minutes per day, per person
- Simplified visual communication and remote assistance between the field operators and the experts allow the expert to see what the operator sees
- Easy and quick to learn (15 minutes) and to use
- The use of images and videos has improved the effectiveness of interventions and reduced the number of disputes



Strengthening the human connection and improving team confidence

The gain in operator confidence has been a significant benefit since Rainbow's integration into the SARP team. Quick familiarization with Rainbow, which takes only 15 minutes to complete, and the ability to rely on the expertise of specialists, has helped to increase field operators' confidence when working with the system. As a result, the number of abandoned jobs decreased because operators knew that in a complex situation, they could call a specialist with just a couple of clicks, tackle any issues, and try to find a solution. Collaboration has facilitated the integration of newly hired staff and remote-workers, enabling them to more rapidly connect with their teams

"All these little details made the difference," says Claire Déchelotte. "Although it is difficult to put a precise financial figure on the results, at the moment, the time saved per operator, the number of jobs completed, and the reduction in the number of non-completions are gains that our management can recognise. We will certainly have more accurate KPIs later on." Time saved on each intervention has also made it possible to carry out additional projects every week.

“This work had a huge impact on the field teams and freed up quality time. The time saved per operator, the number of completed jobs, the reduction in the number of incomplete jobs are benefits easily recognized by Senior Management.”

CLAIRE DECHELOTTE, HEAD OF INNOVATIVE AND DIGITAL PROJECTS,
TECHNICAL AND INNOVATION DEPARTMENT, SARP GROUP

