



Case Study



# **Symrise AG boosts workplace to a future-proof level – because employee experience is key to success**

**Do what matters**

## From old habits to new ways of working

As Symrise AG (Symrise) pursues a dedicated focus on its customers, the development of innovative formulations and a targeted expansion into new markets, state-of-the-art ways of collaboration are making their way into the working lives of its nearly 12,500 employees.

Nostalgia is something many of us like, contemplating times past, but do we also seek it in our everyday work? Employees at Symrise – a tradition-rich German based company listed in DAX40 that produces and sells fragrance, flavoring and food ingredients in a visionary way – would clearly say “no.” Even though many Symrise colleagues have been with the company for over 30 years and know quite a bit about the company’s history, that does not mean they want to relive the good old days. In their day-to-day work, they long for more flexibility and digital solutions that make their jobs more efficient and comfortable.

## Business situation: New ways of working require a change in behavior

As new tools provided the opportunity for new ways of working, it was a challenge for many Symrise colleagues to immediately let go of habits they had practiced for years. For example, many employees were sharing their inboxes with colleagues to support their collaboration needs. “This is not a modern workplace habit,” says Paul Watzlawik, head of infrastructure and service management at Symrise.

Experts can meet people where they are and accompany them on their way to new behaviors that fit the contemporary workplace and their needs. To start this journey, Symrise opened an RFP for a [Microsoft 365](#) rollout. “A lot of people were not experienced with a software change, and a lot of respondents to the RFP had no training or support,” says Dominik Rzepka, director of corporate communications, internal and change communications at Symrise.

With our “New Workstyle” team, Avanade stood out from the competition. “Even in a perfect world, where you have migrated all tools and processes, new tools and new processes occur. So, we need to adjust quickly to evolving technology with new work styles,” says Lisa Kinnigkeit, workplace advisory manager at Avanade.

**Company Name:** Symrise AG

**Country:** Germany

**Company Size:** 12,500+

**Industry:** Consumer Goods

**Solution:** Microsoft 365

Our New Workstyle team has the distinct advantage of bringing technical expertise while also providing valuable knowledge to address the human component for the necessary behavioral change.

With employees at more than 125 sites around the world to serve over 6,000 customers in more than 150 countries, this change marked a major challenge for Symrise. Due to the company size itself, and as support for mergers and acquisitions (growth goals), Symrise had a high demand for a standardized digital workplace. In these circumstances – and in view of the pandemic – Symrise decided to migrate from Lotus Notes to Microsoft 365 with the aim to:

- Improve the employee experience
- Be more attractive to potential employees
- Onboard newly hired employees more easily, even remotely
- Increase data security
- Reduce technical barriers to create a comfortable digital workplace

## Solution: An employee-focused migration

With the guidance of Avanade, Symrise ran a small pilot before deciding to replace Lotus Notes and other apps. Selected leaders tested the solution with Microsoft Outlook, [Microsoft Teams](#), OneDrive for Business and other apps within the Microsoft 365 suite. Given that the pilot went well, the way was open for an accelerated migration.

To determine how to support Symrise employees through the migration and provide recommendations for Microsoft 365 use, we conducted a change impact analysis as a first step. Employees manually installed Microsoft 365 in a two-phase approach and initiated migration of their emails and contacts from Lotus Notes to Outlook. To work efficiently in the new

software environment, the Microsoft 365 project team – consisting of select colleagues from group IT, corporate communications and Avanade – provided comprehensive training and a wide range of self-directed education. An intranet knowledge base, as well as on-demand, in-person and remote training in four time zones and five languages made it easier for Symrise employees to get needed information.

Since all this was happening while Symrise employees were performing their regular jobs, the big question for the project team was how to get people's attention. A catchy name, logo and design for the migration communication raised employee awareness. Nevertheless, IT is something intangible for many people. The project team therefore set itself the goal of making the migration project visible and creating experiences. Symrise held Microsoft 365 consulting days at its headquarters with fun activities.

Due to the high priority for Symrise, the first consulting days took place onsite in Germany and France. To be closer to employees, the team offered a wide range of activities like exhibition booths, live training and various playful activities to become aware of old behavior patterns. There was also a photo booth to capture good moments together with the team. Employees at locations in the US and Brazil – where the team was unable to visit onsite at this time – were able to clarify their questions in virtual consulting days. Due to the great success of the events, further consulting days around the digital workplace followed in Germany, France and the US, and are planned for Singapore and Brazil.

"We have entities everywhere in the world. Cross-regional teams work and collaborate," says Watzlawik. With the help of local Avanade team members, Symrise successfully crossed gaps between the European work style and work culture elsewhere. "It was seen as a great advantage to have local Avanade colleagues, for example from Brazil, who could address questions and habits directly and build a bridge to the Germany-based project team," he says.

As much as the pandemic situation allowed, the focus was on personal consulting. To get an impression of the diverse workplaces – for example, in the laboratories – and take on the perspective of the employees, the project team visited them right at their desks. In this way, the team identified employee needs even better and was able to define suitable measures. The satisfaction was also reflected in its ratings: a mean score of 4.76 in the US and 4.66 in France (on a scale from 1 to 5) clearly indicates a positive response to this employee-centric concept. "It was good to meet the experts on Microsoft 365, to be able to ask questions directly and learn the tools," says a participant of the Microsoft 365 consulting days in France.

## Result: New work habits powered by curiosity

To get a lasting, sustainable change in behavior – and especially in mindset – many small steps are necessary. It also requires the will, courage and curiosity to take a step into a new, more comfortable working reality with Microsoft 365 at Symrise. To build a bridge into this new world, the Microsoft 365 project team reliably stood by the employees, providing helpful guidance and inspirational tips, and was itself a role model of a modern way of working.

The employees' reaction to the individual user adoption measures and Microsoft 365 support from the New Workstyle team also proved the success of this human-centered strategy. This positive feedback on the entire migration process convinced management that the migration was necessary and they had made the right decision. Also, employees in the IT department recognized that the implemented approach made the migration a success and inspired greater employee collaboration.

In the meantime, all Symrise employees have activated their Microsoft 365 accounts. They embraced Teams with an enthusiasm beyond expectations, allowing for the elimination of other video conferencing solutions to provide a clearer IT landscape. In numerous conversations, Symrise employees have excitedly reported how their working lives have changed. For example, many enjoy the flexibility to organize their day in accordance with their needs or to collaborate simultaneously on documents at the same time with great time savings.

**"The biggest thing that's changed is the mindset of people – that they're now thinking of their workplace as digital. You can see it in their requests for functionality, like a Microsoft Teams live event. People are exploring. Each and every employee is rethinking their ways of working and work style every day to improve by using digital tools."**

- Dominik Rzepka

Director of Corporate Communications, Internal and Change Communications, Symrise AG

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Symrise has also adapted to the journey with some changes in working policies to support hybrid work. Meanwhile, the company established teams that exclusively work in remote environments. In addition, the office space was gradually geared towards hybrid working, away from the daily onsite presence, to create even more flexibility. Therefore, regarding software, the focus is on developing the use of tools and transitioning traditional ways of working to new, necessary processes. This also includes coaching for managers and strategies for employees' journeys to functioning remotely.

"A digital workplace is nothing you achieve; it's an ongoing journey," says Kinnigkeit. And since Microsoft 365 follows an evergreen process, exciting changes can also be expected on Symrise's digital journey.

### About Symrise AG

Symrise is a global supplier of fragrances, flavorings, cosmetic active ingredients and raw materials, as well as functional ingredients. Its clients include manufacturers of perfumes, cosmetics, food and beverages, the pharmaceutical industry and producers of nutritional supplements and pet food. Its sales of approximately €4.6 billion in the 2022 fiscal year make Symrise a leading global provider. Headquartered in Holzminden, Germany, the Group is represented in more than 100 locations in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the United States and Latin America. Symrise works with its clients to develop new ideas and market-ready concepts for products that form an indispensable part of everyday life. Economic success and corporate responsibility are inextricably linked as part of this process. Symrise – always inspiring more.



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**About Avanade**

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital, cloud and advisory services, industry solutions and design-led experiences across the Microsoft ecosystem. Every day, our 60,000 professionals in 26 countries make a genuine human impact for our clients, their employees and their customers. Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at [www.avanade.com](http://www.avanade.com)

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