

Integrating Data Centers, Branch Offices, and Cloud Resources with Cisco HyperFlex and Cisco Intersight

Akris · Industry: Fashion/Retail · Size: 2000 employees · Location: St. Gallen, Switzerland

Akris is an international fashion house based in St. Gallen, Switzerland. The third-generation, family-owned company's renowned collections and signature accessories are sold in more than 500 locations worldwide. For more information, visit [akris.com](https://www.akris.com).

Challenges

- Simplify and align global operations
- Improve branch office support and visibility
- Increase business and IT flexibility

Solutions

- Cisco HyperFlex™ system
- Cisco Intersight™ infrastructure management
- Cisco Meraki™ switches, firewalls, access points, and smart cameras

Results

- Simplified and accelerated IT operations
- Reduced costs
- Shifted focus from technology to business

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For more information

- [Cisco HyperFlex](#)
- [Cisco Intersight](#)
- [Cisco Meraki](#)

Challenge: Simplify and align global operations

An acclaimed Swiss fashion house, Akris has grown steadily since its humble beginnings in 1922. Today, its collections and accessories can be purchased online, at dozens of branded boutiques, and in hundreds of affiliated retail stores around the world.

“We’re a small, family-owned company that operates on a global scale,” says Thomas Käser, CIO at Akris. “From an IT standpoint, we need to be extremely efficient.”

Until recently, his team’s efforts were becoming progressively fragmented. Server, storage, network, and desktop systems required dedicated specialists. Point-of-sale, wholesale, and e-commerce channels were managed independently. And with the company opening new retail stores each year, the team’s capacity was increasingly strained.

“Every store, partner, and market has its own unique needs and requirements, and we host everything centrally,” Käser explains. “It doesn’t make sense to have a full data center and IT staff in all of our locations.”

With the help of IT services partner Ceruno AG, Akris recently deployed Cisco HyperFlex in its primary data center in Switzerland as well as its largest production site in Romania to simplify and align its global operations. The 3-node, all-flash clusters are integrated and managed with Cisco Intersight, which also extends the environment to the cloud and the company’s branch locations.

“Cisco HyperFlex and Cisco Intersight give us simplicity, standardization, and flexibility,” says Käser. “Whether we host our applications in-house or put them in the cloud, the policies and the management are the same.”

All of Akris’ showrooms, branch offices, and retail locations are connected to the company’s data centers with Cisco Meraki switches, and employees access corporate applications through Citrix virtual desktops.



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Improving branch office connectivity, support

Akris opens two or three new retail stores each year and a new development site every few years. In the past, the company had to send an IT specialist to get those sites up and running, pulling them away from other important tasks.

“We had to deploy the systems onsite and set everything up from scratch,” Käser recalls. “Now we can stage everything centrally, send a Cisco Meraki switch anywhere in the world, and everything is automatically configured and connected. It takes a day or two instead of one or two weeks, and saves us a lot of cost.”

In addition to faster, easier deployments, Akris now has much better visibility and control of the IT resources at its remote locations.

“Cisco Intersight gives us tremendous visibility,” Käser says. “In the past, we wouldn’t hear about problems until they became big problems, but now we can see them before they happen. We can see what’s happening and what’s been changed, and we can proactively address issues before they become problems.”

With systems being monitored and managed centrally, the burdens of IT administration and troubleshooting have been largely lifted from Akris’ branch locations.

“We don’t have IT specialists in our stores or branch offices, so we need to make things as simple and accessible as possible,” Käser says. “Cisco

HyperFlex, Cisco Intersight, and Cisco Meraki have helped us do just that. They’re integrated, automated, and easy to use.”

Shifting focus from infrastructure to services, cloud

With its new infrastructure in place, the role of Akris’ IT team has started to shift.

“We’re spending less time managing the core infrastructure and more time focusing on the business,” Käser explains. “Instead of hardware, we’re thinking about applications, productivity, and efficiency.”

The team is in the process of identifying new service possibilities and determining the right balance of on-premises and cloud-based resources.

“We have more things to do,” Käser claims. “We’re evaluating unified communications and 3D CAD solutions. We’re considering putting our ERP, point-of-sale, and virtual desktop systems in the cloud. And we’d like to take more advantage of IoT and business intelligence technologies. Through open APIs, our Cisco infrastructure will support whatever we want to do and whatever solutions we want to use.”

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