

Remote service and cost savings for DC Airco during COVID-19

Isolating the company network with the IXrouter's 4G option to connect securely



Normally, DC Airco's service engineers fly all over the world to install their heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. However, the global COVID-19 pandemic has prevented this. Marc Schimmel, service manager at DC Airco, talks about the solution they found at IXON.

DC Airco is an advanced manufacturer of HVAC solutions and critical cooling systems for (mobile) applications that operate entirely on a battery or don't have access to AC power. Think of trains, excavators and other vehicles that have to deal with vibrations and extreme conditions such as in mining and defense. The HVAC solutions are also ideal for stationary equipment, such as battery rooms and hybrid, solar-powered, off-grid equipment stations.

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I think there are currently a lot of companies with the same problem as we had. You want to be on location and you can reserve time for it, but you just don't want to fly right now.

Marc Schimmel, Service manager at DC Airco

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Problems caused by COVID-19 lockdown

The global pandemic caused problems for many companies around the world. DC Airco was also affected by the COVID-19 measures, especially the restrictions on flying, as their customers are located all over the world. At the beginning of 2020, they had a major project with a company that makes automatic electric vehicles for passenger transport. DC Airco supplies various climate control products in such a vehicle to cool the passengers, the equipment and the battery bank. Before commissioning, delivered equipment is installed and tested on-site. It's then checked whether the equipment does what it should do. Is everything working properly? Is there enough air coming out of the ducts to cool?

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“We had been working on the project for a long time and it just had to be put into operation during the Dutch government's “intelligent” lockdown. So there was a problem there. The only solution was to have the PLC program installed by an external technician and then take it over via Teamviewer. However, software would then be installed on someone's computer and it could also be modified. That's something you want to prevent,” says service manager Marc Schimmel. “Everyone just wants business as usual, but because we have to adhere to protocols and we cannot fly, that's not possible”.

Immediate start with remote access

“Accessing a company network from a distance is very difficult anyway. Customers are terrified that you end up finding something you're not allowed to see. So we had to look for another solution,” Marc says. “I started looking for all the solutions on the market and soon found IXON. The free trial period was a big advantage for us. It allowed me to start right away and see for myself if it would work for us.” In Austria there is a DC Airco customer who builds machines to grind train rails. Each machine contains eight different DC Airco units. They now simply send the IXrouter to the customer. “The installation is easy for the customer and we can do the commissioning together online. I have an immediate connection to their network. This is much quicker than by phone, because you have to see what exactly is happening at the same time, which is sometimes difficult to see. Now I can just watch live,” says Marc.

Benefits the IXON Cloud offers DC Airco:

- ✓ Time saving and costs reduction
- ✓ Safe, isolated connection with 4G
- ✓ Solving problems together with the customer
- ✓ Easy installation of the IXrouter for the customer

Quick remote service

DC Airco uses the IXrouter for remote commissioning. If there is a malfunction or input from the customer, they can go through it together. “For example, if the customer asks for a fire alarm that automatically stops the air conditioning, we test this together through remote access,” says Marc.

“Customers often don't want to give their internet connection or they don't want to connect their company network to Ethernet. The IXrouter's 4G option ensures that you isolate the company network. This makes everything safe and accessible. We greatly appreciate this feature. We have now put a 4G card in the PLC, then we tell the customer to just connect the IXrouter and we then set up a VPN connection with the IXrouter. The customer then grants access via the IXON Cloud platform and it's just like I'm actually on location. We can simply walk through it together. This feels much safer for the customer. We now want to look at every project to see if we can provide an IXrouter.”

Major savings

Remote access provides enormous savings for both DC Airco and its customers. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, DC Airco's service engineers flew to the customer location. This involves high costs: the cost of the flight ticket, time spent travelling and waiting, and transportation from the airport to the customer, which sometimes requires a rental car. “We usually charge 1.5 days for commissioning, depending on the location. Often you don't fly back until the following day, so the cost of an overnight stay is also added,” says Marc Schimmel. “This can easily add up to thousands of euros and these costs are paid for by the customer. With the IXON solution we save up to 70% of these costs”.



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