

Rapid Circle helps Arkin stay connected with patients during COVID-19 with Microsoft Teams



Challenge: Arkin could no longer see patients in-person – they needed to enable remote care

With COVID-19 forcing people to stay at home, care-providers like Arkin need new, virtual ways of connecting with patients.

Solution: Partnering with Rapid Circle to deploy Microsoft Teams

To enable remote counseling sessions, Arkin worked with Microsoft partner Rapid Circle to deploy key communications and security solutions such as Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Intune.

Results: Improved safety and comfort for patients, enhanced efficiency for doctors

With Rapid Circle's help, Arkin has updated their IT infrastructure to meet patients where they are, even in the comfort of their own home.

It's Monday morning and Arkin psychiatrist Tjeerd van Rees Vellinga, MD, prepares for an appointment with a patient who has just arrived in the waiting room. Today, Dr. van Rees Vellinga takes some extra time to review medications and put the final touches on some notes about a new prescription. He admits the patient into his office and makes a quick visual assessment of his client's mood so he can help the patient relax. It's the same weekly ritual they have practiced since beginning therapy a year ago. Except that today, nothing is the same: this session unfolds virtually, with Dr. van Rees Vellinga in his home office and the patient connecting from home.

Arkin, one of the largest mental health networks in the Netherlands, celebrates its history of leadership in mental health services with the phrase, "Connecting client perspective with skilled support." It underscores Arkin's mission to help clients regain control of their lives by establishing therapeutic connections between clients, practitioners, administrators, community agencies, and families.

When COVID-19 struck in early March 2020, the entire global community was rocked, leaving many people with feelings of additional stress, social isolation, and intense uncertainty. No longer able to see patients in person, Arkin had to pivot to an entirely new treatment paradigm: virtual counseling. To enable this, Arkin knew it would need to utilize some new technological solutions, but it didn't know where to start.

"At Arkin, we have the ambition to transform mental healthcare in the Netherlands. To achieve that, we need to digitally transform. Rapid Circle helped with this over the course of the last six years... We will encounter many surprises and challenges, and, along the way, we will create new things based on new ideas. In that journey it is crucial that we have a partner that we trust, a partner that believes our vision, and a partner that comes with ideas that help us in our healthcare ambitions proactively."

— Michiel Kooper, Chief Information Officer, Arkin

A partnership of trust with Rapid Circle

For support, Arkin reached out to Rapid Circle, their trusted partner in innovation. Rapid Circle, a longstanding Microsoft partner and recent recipient of the 2020 Worldwide Microsoft Partner of the Year Award for Teamwork, has helped Arkin adapt to the changing healthcare landscape for over six years. With its deep expertise in configuring and deploying Microsoft technology, Rapid Circle was an ideal partner to help Arkin through this newest transition to remote counseling.

Laying the groundwork six years ago with Microsoft 365

Arkin and Rapid Circle's partnership began six years ago when Rapid Circle helped Arkin deploy Office 365 (now Microsoft 365) in response to changing workplace expectations. Together, they built a strategy for a modern workplace and a cloud platform for innovation.

"To achieve our high standards, we need digital workplace tools for our administrators and practitioners to work together more efficiently. That's why we chose Microsoft 365," says Michiel Kooper, Chief Information Officer at Arkin. "It's a future-proof platform that's easy to connect to our client-related applications, and it offers the security and privacy we require."

Innovating over the years

Since deploying Microsoft 365, Rapid Circle has helped Arkin accelerate their digital

transformation and adapt to challenges in many ways, implementing solutions for healthcare, collaboration, data analytics, and medical record sharing.

Rapid Circle has also supported the development of productivity and budgeting dashboards in Power BI. Now, rather than sharing different versions of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets via email, Arkin managers can look at Power BI dashboards to easily review financial data and budgets, ensuring that practitioners complete treatment protocols in compliance with funding regulations. "We face the challenge of continuing to provide care under growing funding pressures and a shortage of qualified personnel," says Kooper. "We share Power BI dashboards with our practitioners so they can review client schedules and fill in any gaps to accommodate more clinical appointments. Practitioners also gain insight from the dashboards to make sure they have completed the data required to receive accurate funding for their services."

The secure workplace

To ensure that Arkin's transition to a cloud workplace did not compromise the safety of its information, Rapid Circle helped secure Arkin's newly remote workforce with Microsoft Office 365 Advanced Threat Protection. "Going to the cloud, we wanted to work anyplace, anytime, and anywhere without compromising privacy," says Fred Pietersma, Chief Information Security Officer at Arkin. "Microsoft 365 has the security tools to enable that avant-garde way of working."

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To enable employees to securely access company data on their own devices, Arkin uses Microsoft Intune. “We use Intune for mobile app management, and we created conditional access policies,” says Pietersma. “For end users, adding security to protect work data on personal devices is a seamless experience that takes a few minutes using the intuitive enrollment process. Anyone accessing the network from outside Arkin must use multifactor authentication, so we feel more secure, even during these unusual times.”

Taking care of the vulnerable, virtually, with Microsoft Teams

One of the most important solutions that Arkin and Rapid Circle have implemented recently has been Microsoft Teams, part of Microsoft 365. Not only does Arkin rely on Microsoft Teams to improve communication among its offices, clinics, practices, and departments, Teams also helps the entire organization collaborate more efficiently. With Microsoft Teams, Arkin employees can chat with colleagues and patients, conduct video meetings, and store and edit documents all in one place.

“What makes Arkin unique is the connection across our 12 specialties that ensures continuity of care,” explains Kooper. “Microsoft Teams provides a platform that adds to this culture of collaboration, so our care plans are even more integrated and effective.”

Now, in the wake of COVID-19, Arkin is using Microsoft Teams to hold virtual counseling sessions with patients, enabling them to receive the treatment they need from the safety of their own home.

‘The future of healthcare has changed’

Dr. van Rees Vellinga believes that Microsoft Teams brings some interesting nuances to counseling sessions that can enrich virtual appointments. “Working together over Microsoft Teams, I find a greater equality between the patient and the doctor,” he says. “I’m in my office, the patient is in their home, and we are just two people having a conversation. Patients are more relaxed in the familiarity of their homes, and that’s helpful when you want to get to the core of their problems as quickly as possible. I also gain new insight into a patient in a different environment than the office, which can provide clues to help me with therapy.”

Microsoft Teams makes it easy for Arkin patients to receive remote treatment – to attend virtual appointments, patients simply open a meeting invitation in their email. “Patients responded well to the flexibility of the solution,” says Dr. van Rees Vellinga. “There’s no stress having to get to my office, find a parking spot, and sit in a public waiting room. Microsoft Teams helps us deliver care where the patient is most comfortable.”

“The future of healthcare has changed. My colleagues and I see a lot of potential for combining video counseling and face-to-face sessions. Over the past three months, I’ve had a lot fewer no-shows – if patients are sick or they don’t feel like coming into my office, I can just video call them and see them directly. For me, psychotherapy is about making a connection – this is a new way to do that.”

— Madelein van Woerkom, Health Psychologist, Arkin

Looking forward to resuming his traditional practice after COVID-19, Dr. van Rees Vellinga sees the potential for keeping virtual sessions as part of his practice, likely for follow-up sessions or quick patient conversations.

Power Platform: Unlocking new value in Microsoft Teams with Rapid Circle

To unlock additional value within Microsoft Teams, Arkin implemented Rapid Circle's provisioning engine. Now, each administrative department—such as communication, IT, and care administration—and every care unit has its own dedicated Teams channel. The provisioning engine automatically enrolls employees in channels based on their job role, department, cost center, and project, while giving managers the power to control each Teams channel under their jurisdiction. The app is created using Microsoft Power Platform.

"Giving managers control over membership, including guests, gave them a sense of ownership and really drove the adoption of Teams," adds Pietersma. "Today, employees use Teams to more easily plan multidisciplinary consultations from different offices in our network."

Rapid Circle also helped Arkin add healthcare-related functionality to Microsoft Teams by creating an app, also based on Microsoft Power Apps, to boost search capability in Teams. Now, from Teams, employees can quickly locate

information, such as COVID-19 protocols, stored in SharePoint.

"Rapid Circle is a great partner that really listens to what we need," says Kooper. "Because our employees are spending so much time working in Teams, we wanted a solution to help them quickly find their content, such as protocols, by searching with key words, themes, or document types. This frees up time for them to spend on clients."

Looking ahead to the future

Arkin knows that if there is one thing that's constant in this world, it's change. No one knows what new challenge lies around the corner, but Arkin is confident that they will be able to face it, adapt to it, and overcome it with support from Rapid Circle. "Fulfilling Arkin's mission on building a strong community starts with meeting our patients where they are, when they want, even in the comfort of their homes," concludes Kooper. "Our practitioners now provide our patients with that flexibility, thanks to Microsoft 365 and Teams."



"I am very proud we have had the privilege to help Arkin innovate the way mental healthcare is provided in the Netherlands. The Microsoft cloud platform has been an enabler during the last years. We are happy we have the kind of relationship where we can share ideas with Arkin and create innovations for them."

— Harold Punter, CEO, Rapid Circle