

ThinPrint GmbH

High-performance, consistent infrastructures for printing and distributing information in server based computing environments and via the mobile internet are the focus of the product portfolio of ThinPrint GmbH. A significant pillar of the company is the .print technology, basis for the software print solutions developed for server based, web based, and mobile computing. These solutions are already being successfully applied around the world. Previously the company has made its name mainly in the Citrix MetaFrame and Microsoft Terminal Services arena, but has been marketing its products increasingly and equally as successfully for distributed networks, web applications, and mobile applications. New innovations from the successful IT manufacturer are the product families Content Beamer, a plug-and-play solution for mobile internet access, and Public Printing for printing at public locations. 500 renowned distributors and resellers in 48 countries currently market the products of the German software manufacturer with branch offices in USA and Australia. Thanks to strategic partnerships, the client components of the patent pending .print technology are integrated in a multitude of terminals, print boxes, PDAs and mobile telephones.

Service from home offices – retrofitting KKH

Citrix MetaFrame and the print management solution ThinPrint .print used for integrating around 700 home offices.

KKH is the fourth largest nationally marketed health insurance company in Germany. Steeped in tradition, the insurance company supports a nation-wide network with 114 modern KKH service centers. About two million people entrust the protection of their health to the KKH. It goes without saying that the health insurance company also works for mercantile employees in commercial aspects. For this reason, an organizational change to the KKH was instituted for the year 2002. The system with over 400 branches was no longer efficient. Marketing and administration needed to be reformed according to new strategic goals and demands. To be closer to and more effective for potential customers, the company decided to set up 700 home offices.

Feasibility study of solution with Citrix MetaFrame

In December 2001, Systematics GmbH (now EDS Business Solutions GmbH), one of KKH's IT partners, was commissioned to conduct a feasibility study for setting up and integrating workstations in home offices. A system configuration based on Citrix MetaFrame proved to be an intelligent solution which at the same time promised comparatively simple administration of over 700 clients.

Connection of about 700 home offices to the Citrix server via ISDN with VPN tunnel

The company PCs in employees' offices at home were furnished with an ICA client, a VPN client, and an ISDN/DSL card. ISDN access was used to create a VPN tunnel in the T-Online network for secure connection to the KKH network. Within this system, employees log on to a Citrix server farm, which gives them their accustomed work screen and offers access to the diverse groups of servers. In addition to KKH's own applications, existing programs like Word, 3270 emulation, and browsers were included. Working in Citrix sessions offers advantages to system management and simplifies change management. Even with low network bandwidth, it is possible to provide a central file server with a drive structure that optimally supports the communication processes.

Print management solution from ThinPrint provides compression and bandwidth control and simplifies the administration of printer drivers

Management of print processing is handled by ThinPrint software, because it both compresses the print data and only uses a small amount of the slim ISDN bandwidth. KKH operates 18 servers for close to 700 home offices. The default virtual printer driver is the ThinPrint Output Gateway that enables support for all printers available in the home offices without a printer driver having to be installed on the MetaFrame servers.



The bulding of the KKH in Hanover

Script ensures optimal print rate with load balancing

There was an additional demand to be met: print speed needed to be optimized for sending large print data volume, as when printing mass mailings and sales statistics, to home offices. So that an individual port did not have to be added for each of the home offices and to simplify administration, the system engineers at KKH and Systematics developed a script for load balancing the system. It was possible to develop this script by working together with ThinPrint. As a result, every server has ten ThinPrint Output Gateways, each of these with its own port. The user is assigned to a server and an Output Gateway when he logs on. This idea was so successful that it has been included in the .print Engine as standard feature since product version 5.5. "Available capacity is thus used optimally and print data congestion completely avoided," rejoiced Jörg Mecke, Chief IT Consultant at Systematics, at the time (Mecke is now systems engineer at msg systems AG).

"The modification was a really clever idea that guaranteed as-needed print processing and greatly simplified administration. Obviously we worked closely at the side of our partners for the very special environment and requirements of their customer," explains Charlotte Künzell, General Manager of ThinPrint GmbH.

"When ThinPrint was initially been installed, it was not always possible to use all KKH-specific paper formats, such as labels. However, the project was a complete success. In cooperation with our partners, these customer-specific demands could also be resolved", Künzell elaborates.

Marcus Knopf (responsible systems engineer), who headed the project on the KKH side, can report, "The reorganization was not easy, but in the meantime it has been proved that this system configuration enables efficient work in the home office. For our IT department, this was a mammoth project. Together with Sytematics and ThinPrint, we have successfully mastered the demands on print output." Jörg Mecke, who now assists KKH as employee of msg systems AG, summarizes, "ThinPrint has economically optimized the entire system."

KKH

Die Kaufmännische

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