



Gesellschaft für Bioanalytik, Hamburg

Gesellschaft für Bioanalytik Hamburg Harmonizes IT Infrastructure with NetMan Desktop Manager

Centralized Management Of Decentralized Labs

With nine locations throughout the country, a heterogeneous software landscape and a backup strategy in need of optimization, the Gesellschaft für Bioanalytik (GBA) in Hamburg was ready for a thorough IT overhaul. One important goal was to implement a harmonized laboratory information management system with central application distribution and a reliable strategy for data serving and backup. Similar goals, if on a much smaller scale, were being pursued at the same time by a company called Dr. Kaiser & Dr. Woldmann GmbH, formerly a competitor of the GBA, where work on the introduction of a new IT solution was already in progress. But while their IT upgrade was still in the planning phase, the smaller company was taken over by GBA and their project suddenly had to include all nine of GBA's locations. "Of course we had to basically scrap the plans we had been working on," said Michael Lieske, Managing Director at EFF Eins Team GmbH, a systems integrator in Hamburg. "We had to scale up the project for a much larger company, and integrate the regional offices as well." The basic goal had not changed: to have all employees use a unified laboratory information management system (LIMS), with full access to all the data and programs they need at their own workstations. Furthermore, centralized data management was essential, both for better security and for an uncomplicated yet robust backup strategy. "Up to that point, some of our employees at the various branch offices had been using different systems, which made seamless data exchange impossible," explains Jens Sörensen, Project Manager at GBA. "They had to export the data first in a fairly complex procedure and then e-mail it to the other location, where it had to be imported into that system."

Local IT Company Called In To Assist

With all of these problems to solve, the GBA turned to the EFF Eins-Team in Hamburg. This contact grew out of the takeover of the Dr. Kaiser & Dr. Woldmann GmbH company, which had already entrusted its system to the EFF Eins-Team for the past year. "The EFF Eins-Team was highly recommended by Kaiser & Woldmann. What's more, they were already familiar with the same types of issues we were faced with," says Björn Hoffmann, head of IT at the GBA.

"Having evaluated the situation at GBA, we recommended a terminal server solution from the outset, Jens Lenzing of EFF Eins-Team recalls. "The centralized architecture of a TS system lets us ensure the best possible data security while at the same time reducing administrative overhead," he noted. The TS solution is based on terminal services in Microsoft Windows Server. But MS Windows Server alone could not cover all of GBA's requirements. Specifically, in the areas of printer connections, load balancing and bandwidth management the Windows Server leaves a lot to be desired. And when it comes to license management, Microsoft itself recommends the use of complementary third-party products.

NetMan Desktop Manager Fits The Bill

As a partner of H+H Software GmbH, the EFF Eins-Team portfolio naturally includes NetMan Desktop Manager (NDM) a terminal server solution designed for medium-sized businesses. NDM is a comprehensive extension of terminal services for the Windows Server, specifically developed to simplify both application publishing and the concomitant assignment of user privileges. It also has an integrated PDF printer driver so clients can use their local printers. Soon after the first meeting, the experts at the EFF Eins-Team began laying the groundwork for the new solution. One prerequisite was a significant expansion of the network infrastructure both in the central data processing center at the Hamburg office and at all the other offices, located in Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia. The first step was to incorporate two high-performance server machines, running a total of seven virtual terminal servers. A number of other servers were required as well, such as mail servers, domain controllers, file servers and quality management servers. While some new hardware was needed, a majority of the existing machines could be incorporated too, some of them taking on new functions. For example, what used to be file servers in the branch offices are now used as domain controllers for communication with the main office. "We also had to make sure that the existing user terminals could still be used within the new system. Otherwise, the total cost would have shot through the roof, which simply wasn't necessary," points out Jens Sörensen. "Better yet, in future we can purchase economical thin clients for the laboratory workstations, which have the further advantage that they take up less space," Sörensen added.

Rollout: A Logistical Challenge

Once the infrastructure had been set up for its future tasks, NetMan Desktop Manager was installed on the servers in the main office and the required user accounts were set up. Next, the applications to be published were installed on the terminal servers. These included the new, uniform LIMS as well as standard applications like Microsoft Office. More complex data-analysis applications are still executed locally. "The analysis programs create such large volumes of data that a central installation would severely overload the network," explains Björn Hoffmann. The results of analysis, on the other hand, are stored on a central file server so the employees at all branches have ready access. "Security is ensured because the data never leaves the data processing center which also simplifies the backup strategy considerably," Jens Lenzing explains.



Project dialog between F1-Team and GBA

The next step was to implement the new solution at all regional locations in series. They started at the central office in Hamburg. "The complete changeover to the new system is a huge undertaking. But we knew this would be the case," remarks Sörensen. "After the first six 6 rollouts, it has become a pretty routine procedure for us." At the end of the project a total of about 200 workstations will be served data and applications by NDM. By that time, the few issues that turned up during the course of installation are sure to have been resolved as well. For example, in the beginning there were problems with Outlook, the Microsoft e-mail client. These were solved almost immediately by an update in NDM. Today, the system is stable and reliable in all GBA branch offices.

Changes Initially Met With Skepticism

For GBA staff, the introduction of the new system entailed some changes as well. "Employees can no longer store data anywhere they like," explains Michael Lieske. "We now have a clear, precisely defined file storage structure that everyone has to use." All employees received intensive training in the use of the new system and the unfamiliar aspects of a terminal server solution. For instance, only screen content is transferred over the network, and some applications have a slight delay before the screen data is shown. Since the introduction, however, all the GBA employees have become accustomed to the new situation and have come to appreciate the differences. Now they can find all the data and applications they need, quickly and easily, no matter which workstation they log in on. Data exchange with other locations, too, is much smoother and trouble-free. "The combination of terminal server technology and NDM has enabled us to simplify many of the processes in our company," Jens Sörensen summarizes contentedly.

The Project Numbers

The introduction of terminal server technology and NetMan Desktop Manager at the Gesellschaft für Bioanalytik Hamburg was implemented entirely by the EFF Eins-Team's IT specialists. The overall project included the implementation of 22 new servers, 8 Windows Terminal Server licenses and about 200 user licenses for NetMan Desktop Manager.

About The Gesellschaft Für Bioanalytik

The GBA Group has its roots in a laboratory established in 1977 in Hamburg-Harburg, called Chemisches Laboratorium Dr. Dr. rer.nat. E. Döllefeld, Handelschemiker. The laboratory was a spin-off of the Environmental Chemistry Department of a medical lab founded by Dr. Erich Döllefeld, physician and chemist. Work at the lab originally focused on testing of drinking water, foods and consumer goods. In 1989, divisions of soil, waste and air analysis were added, the company became a GmbH, and the name was changed to Gesellschaft für Bioanalytik Hamburg mbH (GBA). The field of pharmaceutical analysis was added in 1995. Since then, further laboratories have been integrated and today the GBA Group has more than 200 employees at 9 locations.



Laboratory of GBA

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About The EFF Eins Team GmbH

The IT system vendor EFF Eins Team GmbH currently has ten employees entrusted with IT maintenance for customers in Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony. Their main office is in southwest Hamburg. The core business of the EFF Eins-Team includes network design, administration, consultation on potential for improvement, and the provision and installation of hardware and software. Expert consultation is their specialty. The company works closely together with a number of manufacturers to provide customers with the best possible products and services.

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About H+H Software GmbH

H+H Software GmbH, founded in 1989, is a systems and software manufacturer located in Göttingen, Germany. The company's core business includes consulting and the development and marketing of application, license and network management solutions. H+H Software's clientele is mainly composed of large and medium-sized companies, universities, government agencies, libraries and schools. But H+H also serves individual users with the stand-alone version of its popular CD and DVD emulator, Virtual CD. The company's products include NetMan, NetMan Desktop Manager, Virtual CD and HAN (Hidden Automatic Navigator) and ProGuard. H+H also offers an optimized NetMan version for educational use, NetMan for Schools and H+H Schoolbox.

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