

## Client Management

### CONSOLIDATED WORKPLACE SYSTEMS

By introducing a uniform IT infrastructure, five pension insurance agencies in Germany are looking to optimise the management of their PC workstations. The challenge: some 18,000 computer workstations are administrated using a wide range of technologies and from a number of different locations. A consolidation project which was launched in 2010 aims to standardise technologies and IT services with help from solutions by Citrix and DX-Union by MATERNA.

For this large-scale project the regional pension insurance agencies for northern Germany, central Germany, Braunschweig/Hanover, the Rhineland and Westphalia have established an IT service provider of their own: with over 700 employees based at ten sites, the new company, Deutsche Rentenversicherung Nord Ost West Informationstechnik GmbH (NOW IT GmbH), is responsible for the IT systems and the strategic development of the IT infrastructure for the pension insurance agencies.

The 18,000 workstations have a direct link to the IT service provider's mainframe computer. The information and advisory service of the agencies, which is distributed over 155 offices, is also linked so that it can provide customer advice at a local level. Thanks to a comprehensive data network, the helpdesks and information centres can assist members of any of the agencies. All together the German statutory pension insurance scheme has over 57 million customers.

#### Consolidated systems and efficient operation

A major aspect of the consolidation tasks facing NOW IT is the need to establish a uniform management of the IT workstation systems. The challenge was to consolidate the different system platforms and workstation technologies used in the landscape previously. A uniform system management tool will improve the efficiency of the systems from now on.

In addition to the classic tasks of software distribution, the new tool would be required to uniformly provision users, profiles and resources, administrate printers and other devices, but also ensure secure identity management when creating new user accounts. The objective was to design a system architecture which would allow long-term and efficient operation, yet it must be achieved with a justifiable migration effort.

#### Standardising a heterogeneous workstation management

For some years now, the entire lifecycle of the workstation environment at the Deutsche Rentenversicherung Rheinland's regional offices in Münster and Düsseldorf has been administrated using a uniform solution based on DX-Union by MATERNA. DX-Union offers modules that take care of software provision and the management of users, resources and devices. The infrastructure is based on Solaris, Windows and Citrix server systems. The workstations at the Deutsche Rentenversicherung in the northern Germany and Braunschweig regions, on the other hand, work with a Microsoft infrastructure consisting of the central directory service, Active Directory, and Windows servers. Whereas different tools are employed for software and device management, the user and resource management are covered by standard Windows tools. The agency in central Germany, Deutsche Rentenversicherung Mitteldeutschland, has already embarked upon a migration project to convert to a uniform Windows infrastructure, replacing its Novell systems.



## Finding things in common

At NOW IT a department of its own is responsible for all tasks relating to workstation management. However, its staff and IT systems are scattered across a number of sites: whilst, for example, user profiles, printers and file servers are administrated in Münster, device management and desktop security are supervised in Leipzig. Software management is the responsibility of the data centre in Hanover. In other words, not only the technical requirements but also the organisational aspects need to be taken into account, to safeguard communication between users and establish uniform work procedures.

## Creating a basis

The first step for the IT staff at NOW IT and MATERNA was to analyse the existing IT infrastructure environment. Then, in a series of workshops, potential opportunities for optimisation were evaluated. Between the various local offices, around 300 server systems – from domain controllers through file and print servers to backup and terminal servers – were identified. The server operating systems were largely composed of Windows Server 2003 and Solaris. The client systems comprised a wide variety of technologies, including Windows XP, 2000 and NT. On top of that was the issue of some obsolete hardware, which also needed replacing. Another shortfall was that the network speed to the local offices would no longer meet future requirements.

The fact that the data centres and the individual agencies were following different password guidelines was taken into consideration when the new directory service was designed on the basis of Active Directory. To consolidate the existing domain structures, therefore, it was necessary to carry out a migration from the legacy domains to the new domain structure. Finally, NOW IT and MATERNA together developed a concept for a uniform management infrastructure. For the Microsoft Active Directory domain environment, MATERNA's proposal was supplemented by the requirements of NOW IT.

## Decision to opt for established technology

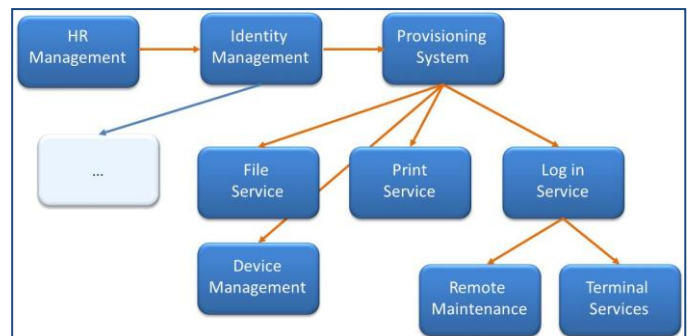
In order to standardise the system management, NOW IT will rely on the DX-Union product family in future. “With DX-Union we have chosen an established tool for a comprehensive user and workstation management,” explains Roland Friedel, head of the

business unit Operation Workstation and Communication Technology at NOW IT.

One particular advantage of DX-Union is that the solution supports heterogeneous IT structures. So the overall architecture of NOW IT at present still provides for a combination of classic PCs, thin clients and full desktops based on a solution by Citrix. For the provisioning of the desktops the company employs three different procedures: a local desktop where all applications are installed on the PCs; a local desktop where individual applications are provisioned via the Citrix Terminal Server solution; or staff work entirely on a virtual Citrix desktop. The proportion of virtual desktops on thin clients will grow in the long term.

Equipped with Citrix products and DX-Union, NOW IT has established an IT desktop environment which is able to link all devices at all of its sites, and considers itself ideally prepared for the changing demands of the future.

The conceptional standardisation of the infrastructure is being accompanied by a series of courses and workshops currently underway to transfer know-how and share processes with all locations. There remains much to be done before the workstation environment management is completely standardised using the current system technology. However, the foundations have been laid and everyone involved in the project is convinced by this future-oriented technology. ■



Logical system architecture for the workstation management at NOW IT