



Case Study

The better solution.

Athlon Car Lease Germany simplifies system admin with Server Based Computing using IGEL thin clients.

Business Solutions from
IGEL Technology





Simple, transparent and efficient.

Leaving car pool and fleet management to the professionals to free up resources for focusing on key competencies is a fundamental operational shift that will truly benefit Athlon Car Lease Germany's customers. The German subsidiary of the Netherlands-based European market leader in car pool leasing handles some 21,000 accounts, making it one of the industry leaders in business car pool leasing and management. Athlon regards technical innovation as crucial to its continuing market success.

Athlon Car Lease Germany's very first web-based car leasing and car pool management solution has been on-stream since February 2001. This system provides easy, transparent and efficient communication between Athlon and its customers. But the company is also undergoing a fundamental internal reorganisation. The current switch to Server Based Computing will radically simplify its IT infrastructure and administration. Athlon's fifteen servers, 90 desktop PCs and 50 laptops are gradually being replaced by an architecture consisting of terminal servers and maintenance-friendly thin clients which can be managed from one central point. "The company's rapid growth and the need to expand our computer environment were dramatically driving up our maintenance and admin costs," says Hai Hendriks, System Manager at Athlon Car Lease Germany. "The ever-increasing cost of updating the Windows-based client server network with its numerous updates and security patches was becoming a particular burden. The dramatic growth in the number of different program versions was also causing problems for our application landscape, which was becoming increasingly heterogeneous."

Thin clients more important than server hardware

The new concept was originally budgeted for in September 2004. The following year it was designed, tested and implemented in collaboration with IT consultancy K-iS Systemhaus, who also initiated the migration and provided the first test devices. According to Hai Hendriks, the most

The customer

- German subsidiary of Netherlands-based European market leader in car pool leasing
- With about 21,000 accounts, Athlon is an industry leader in business car pool leasing and management

important assessment criteria were easy operation and management of the thin clients. After a test phase lasting several weeks, the system manager decided to go with IGEL Technology. "I was immediately impressed by how easy the IGEL-3200 LX Compact is to configure," recalls Hai Hendriks. "Even without any experience of thin clients, I managed to get to grips with the system in just 15 minutes, whereas it took me hours of poring over manuals to understand some of the models from other manufacturers. According to Hendriks, opting for the variant with internal IGEL Linux was the obvious choice. "For the scenario we were aiming for, we got the best value for money and an intuitively designed management solution. For me personally, the choice of the thin clients was therefore much more important than the server hardware.

Easy operation and management

IGEL offered the most options for permanently cutting administration costs, says Hai Hendriks. "When the thin clients are switched on they automatically download their centrally stored profiles via ftp. We do not use specific user profiles. Plus the IGEL Remote Management Suite, which is supplied free of charge, enables us to run firmware updates easily, automatically and securely. The fail-safe update mechanism provided by IGEL enables interrupted updates to be resumed at any time without the risk of technical problems." The IGEL thin clients used by Athlon Car Lease Germany communicate with the server farm exclusively via the ICA protocol. To begin with, the terminal server software will still be running on the 32-bit version of Citrix Presentation Server 4.2 on Windows 2003 Server. About 40 applications are provided centrally, including standard software like Office and MindManager, along with industry-specific UNIX terminal programs like Athlon's own car leasing software and certain CRM tools.



Users take part in test phase

Hai Hendriks gave future users an important role in testing the new solution. "We wanted between 70 and 80% of our users to have spent at least a day working with a thin client during the pilot phase. This enabled us to find out what applications would have to be provided centrally in the future. It also allowed us to encourage user acceptance at the same time." Besides the improved availability, the migration also brought another benefit in a different area. According to Ingo Kubatschka, project manager at K-iS Systemhaus, "To protect the infrastructure we introduced the complete Access Suite and Advanced Access Control. From the end of April, the Password Manager connected to it will be going live and will cut what used to be a large number of logon processes per user to just one."

The challenge

- To drastically simplify the IT infrastructure and its administration
- To reduce costs caused by updates and security patches
- To increase the availability and flexibility of the whole system

After an ROI calculation, the project kicked off in November 2005 with two test servers and several applications. A total of 120 IGELs and the new server hardware were ordered at the end of December. The rollout started in mid-February. Eighty percent of the thin clients were in operation by the time our head office relocated on 29 March this year. About 30 of our 50 laptops will then be replaced by IGEL thin clients. "Many laptop users only use their laptops for occasional office work at home. In the future this occasional teleworking can be done securely from a home PC."

Quick Return on Investment

The investment in the new thin clients and the server environment should pay for itself within 26 months. The server environment consists of four servers for the users and two for administrative purposes. The system is currently being converted to Windows 2003 Server x64. The 64 bit version of Citrix Presentation Server 4.0 will be introduced after that. In the future Athlon will only have about 10 PCs. "For these machines with their special applications, the critical decision is whether to continue to operate them locally for cost reasons or centrally with lower admin costs and higher availability." Once the roll-out has been completed, Hai Hendriks is also planning to equip external staff with IGEL thin clients. As far as he is concerned, IGEL devices are the only ones worth considering for them, too. "During the test phase I spent several weeks testing different models from a wide range of manufacturers. If some of these manufacturers were to try configuring an IGEL, they would soon realise just how easy it can be to install and configure a thin client."

The solution

- Introduce a Server Based Computing infrastructure based on Citrix Presentation Server 4.2
- 120 IGEL-3200 LX Compact will replace 90 desktop PCs and 30 laptops
- ROI within 26 months

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