

..Deka
(Swiss) Privatbank



Case Study

One Client Does It All

The Deka(Swiss) Privatbank, an investment bank based in Zurich, Switzerland, is strengthening the availability of its IT services with Universal Desktops from IGEL Technology. With their numerous digital services, the new thin clients featuring high graphics capability can also enable access to virtual desktops, the Web and mainframes in emergency situations.

Business Solutions from
IGEL Technology





One Client Does It All

The Deka(Swiss) Privatbank AG is an 80 percent subsidiary of the DekaBank, the investment funds provider with the largest customer base in Germany. Back in 2001, this private bank, which now employs about 70 people in Switzerland, started a major IT modernization project. At that time, Deka(Swiss) introduced server-based computing (SBC), which got it started in creating the optimum desktop infrastructure necessary for meeting its administrative and security goals.

Full Centralization

The change from a client-server network to a Citrix terminal server environment with centralized provision of applications has considerably reduced the administrative workload. In particular, there has been a significant decrease in the need to update locally installed applications. At the same time it was deploying its new SBC topology, Deka(Swiss) also started a program of optimizing its desktop infrastructure. As a first step, some 30 obsolete Compaq Tower PCs were replaced with IBM NetVista terminals, which bank employees used to access a centralized selection of applications. However, shortly thereafter, IBM discontinued support for these end devices. What's more, the graphics performance of the existing system was simply not powerful enough to meet increasing user requirements. "Most notably, we were experiencing a productive bottleneck with Microsoft® PowerPoint presentations and more complex Microsoft® Excel files," recalls Daniel Weber, in charge of IT technology at Deka(Swiss) Privatbank AG. Weber was the one who had gotten the original Citrix project started and then found himself looking around for another manufacturer.

All Improved: Management, Graphics and Flexibility

Through Deka's partner BCD-SINTRAG, Weber got into contact with the German thin client manufacturer IGEL Technology, which, among other things, was also able to offer an upgrade solution for the IBM NetVista units. However,

The Customer

- A Swiss private bank with approximately 70 employees based in Switzerland
- An 80 percent subsidiary of the DekaBank, the investment funds provider with the largest customer base in Germany

instead of taking this intermediate step, Deka(Swiss) decided to take an even bigger one and go ahead and replace the devices. For six weeks, the IT team at Deka(Swiss) put thin client models from various manufacturers to the test. When it was all over, the IGEL model LX Premium had come out on top. It not only can accommodate two monitors but also comes standard with an easy-to-use, intuitive administrative solution. "The IGEL Remote Management Suite gives us the easy, convenient, group-based remote administration capability that we need along with many automated functions. In fact, we can even remotely install firmware updates. We primarily use the dualview workstations in our Finance/Controlling department. With this arrangement, our employees can enjoy the convenience of having two 19" monitors with 1280x1024 resolution with each thin client."

More Deployment Flexibility through Digital Services

Another factor that spoke in favor of going with IGEL was its broad range of digital services that allow different methods of accessing centralized infrastructures. "With the help of the ICA communications protocol and Microsoft® RDP, the integrated Web browser and terminal emulation, we were finally able to implement the emergency services scenario that we had been lacking," Weber states, clearly happy about the outcome. "But it's not only that. Other digital services and the integrated smart-card reader for implementing two-factor authentication could really play a major role in future optimization of our system." For remote access, Deka(Swiss) is already using the integrated Cisco VPN client. Daniel Weber is already planning specific tests not only for the SAP GUI integrated in the IGEL firmware but also for the IP telephony by thin client and USB headset, a further service that the IGEL firmware is already set up to provide.



Virtual Desktops as Emergency Case Scenario

Essentially, what Deka(Swiss) has done by deploying IGEL thin clients is to greatly increase the availability of its desktop infrastructure. "We've got some strict rules when it comes to auditing," explains Daniel Weber. "This is where the Universal Desktop approach from IGEL meets our needs. With the help of their integrated digital services, the IGEL thin clients can still gain access to "Olympic", our bank-specific host application even without a Citrix connection. That's because the terminal emulation necessary to do so can also be provided through the web browser that's part of the thin-client firmware."

What's more, the emergency services scenario at Deka(Swiss) also covers Microsoft Office applications, which are made available by means of virtual PC and thin client. Right now, there are six virtual desktops in operation that run on VMware ESX™ Server in a redundantly configured computer center. After they have switched on their workstations, the thin client users can choose between Citrix access and the virtual desktop. When everything is finally set up, there should be between ten and 15 virtual desktops available in the event of an emergency – at least one for every department. "So far, we're still providing the virtual PCs by means of Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP), but in an upcoming project phase, we intend to convert over to Citrix XenDesktop™. What's really helpful here is that the right ICA protocol version necessary to do this is now already supported by the IGEL firmware. So, when we do switch over to the new technology, we expect to enjoy better overall availability of our virtual desktop solution."

The Challenge

- Modernize the desktop infrastructure by providing greater graphics performance, system availability and security
- Set up an emergency services scenario for Citrix-independent access to essential applications
- Reduce the workload on the IT department



Great Reliability of Desktops

Since 2006, Deka(Swiss) has placed some 80 IGEL thin clients in operation: 65 for direct use by bank employees along with an additional 15 for training, meeting and customer use. The IBM NetVista terminals have now been completely replaced along with the majority of the legacy tower PCs. "Today, our thin client coverage is at 90 percent," Weber reports. "As a result, our IT management load has been greatly reduced. In fact, we administer the entire desktop infrastructure from one single workstation. This has meant a great reduction in the workload for our IT team, which can now fully concentrate on the system servers." Daniel Weber is clearly very pleased with the quality of the IGEL thin clients. "With exception of two defective power supply units, we haven't had any failures since 2006. To be on the safe side, however, we always have three replacement units ready for use." And, should one of them ever happen to be needed, Weber can have no reservations about letting a company trainee hook it up since the thin clients can be easily deployed using plug-and-play. "Once it's connected, the thin client automatically retrieves its configuration from the server, and the user can resume work immediately." Thanks to this automatic configuration capability, the entire rollout took only two weeks to complete.

Better Security, Performance and Ergonomics

With its consistent centralization of data and applications, Deka(Swiss) has also increased its data security. For instance, portable PCs, such as notebooks, cannot access the Deka(Swiss) company network. Although outside sales representatives can take their presentations along with them on one of the few available notebooks, the USB ports necessary for data transmission are only enabled for certain thin-client users. "This requirement imposed by top management is much easier to implement with thin clients than with PCs. Because of the insufficient graphics performance of the NetVista terminals, the users at Deka(Swiss) initially reacted with skepticism to the planned deployment of thin clients. But Daniel Weber met this acceptance problem head on by including the company's power users in the test phase right from the very start. After they had seen for themselves how well the IGEL Thin Clients could easily handle even complex Excel sheets with macros and how much faster they could get their work done, even these expert users were very impressed. Weber reports that the dual view setup with two 19" monitors or the alternative use of a single 21" widescreen display both function perfectly and that the new desktop units also earned some more plus points for improved ergonomics. For instance, "in the accounting department, we now have total peace and quiet with no noises from cooling fans or hard drives to disturb users' concentration on their work. The same thing applies when we give customer presentations."

Complete Automation

The first IGEL thin clients have already paid off for Deka(Swiss). Despite their favorable cost-benefit ratio and an amortization period of three years, the cost factor was actually not the primarily reason for deciding to go with IGEL thin clients. "For us, the most important factors are function, availability and security," Weber emphasizes. "In the future, we intend to

The Solution

- 80 IGEL Series LX Premium Thin Clients with high graphics capability, dualview and numerous digital services: virtual desktops, Web access, terminal emulation, VoIP, etc.
- Virtual desktops now with RDP access via thin clients, in the future via ICA and Citrix XenDesktop
- Remote administration by means of the IGEL Remote Management Suite

further improve the automation of our IT processes. Our planned introduction of the Citrix XenDesktop is best seen in this context. In fact, we've already begun an important optimization step with control via Active Directory, in which we use the Windows® directory services to compile all of our organizational units and their users. Among other things, that's where we store the rights to use USB ports." This is where the IGEL solution can really show what it can do. The IGEL Remote Management Suite sources user profiles along with printer information directly from the Active Directory and applies the corresponding settings to the thin clients.

Many Options for the Future

After optimizing the desktop environment, the IT team at Deka(Swiss) is now working on standardizing printer services. In addition, Deka plans to have full, across-the-board virtualization of the server environment in 2009. Weber is convinced that "IT is a process of continuous improvement," citing recent successes in the desktop area as clear evidence of this: "The thin clients from IGEL have really opened up many options for the future to us. Thanks to their high performance, reliability and deployment flexibility and long service life, we're going to be able to take full advantage of them."

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