

Case Study

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Key Benefits:

- Optimized existing server and virtual machine infrastructure
- Reduced initial cost of workstation purchase by 50%
- Decreased downtime associated with older hardware
- Cut time required by IT to fix workstation issues from days and hours to minutes
- Eliminated need for IT to travel to branch offices

Founded in 1996 and headquartered in Feldkirchen, Germany, Alphaform has grown into a leading European provider of rapid prototyping and mass production services – focusing on the production of automotive, electronic, consumer goods, and medical technology systems.

Alphaform has production locations in England, Finland, Germany and Hungary, and a single data center in Feldkirchen. The company’s IT staff supports over 190 employees located at these various locations. Previously, this meant that IT would travel to each PC when problems arose, resulting in significant productivity loss for the employee and IT member. In addition, Alphaform’s older PCs were running sub-optimally because of dated hardware, resulting in an increase of downtime and on-site visits.

“Our IT staff is located in Germany and was trying to manage multiple desktops across four different countries,” said Kai Fahr, IT manager at Alphaform. “We wanted to centralize management and be able to remotely handle any issues that arise on the

desktop. We also wanted to streamline the process of adding new employees and be able to respond more quickly to our users’ requirements.”

Driven to the Virtual Desktop

Alphaform began using VMware for server virtualization in January 2007. After a successful deployment, the company realized it needed to address its aging PCs, most of which had been in use for four years. In October 2007, Alphaform began researching desktop virtualization solutions and heard about Pano Logic through Zenk, a provider of independent computer consulting services.

Alphaform also investigated Sun's desktop virtualization solution, but chose Pano Logic because of its strong interoperability with VMware, ease of use and management capabilities. In February 2008, Alphaform deployed five Pano devices for a pilot installation and completed the initial production deployment in April 2008.

"We needed a solution that would integrate with our existing infrastructure," said Fahr. "Pano Logic not only fully integrated with our virtualization management tools, but our users were excited about having Pano devices on their desks because of its attractive form factor."

Pano Alleviates Administration Pains, Improves Management

In addition to 150 traditional PCs, Alphaform now has 63 Pano zero-client devices placed throughout the company running office applications and connected within a LAN. Most of these Pano devices are located in Germany, with the rest in England, Finland and Hungary. Alphaform uses two servers virtualized with VMware for the entire implementation of the Pano System. The majority of the employees using Pano devices are knowledge workers whose virtual machines are provisioned from a common image and permanently assigned to the user. A few employees are assigned virtual desktops from a pooled collection and the Pano System provides them with an available desktop each time they log in. Alphaform IT distributes additional software to the virtual machines using NetInstall.

Since deploying the Pano solution, Alphaform has realized significant cost savings on the initial purchase of the Pano System compared with the cost of traditional PCs. The company also has experienced increased productivity and time savings due to the centralized management of the Pano desktops. Instead of traveling to the site of a PC to fix problems – which could take a staff member up to one day – IT can now manage desktop issues from the data center.

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IT manager at Alphaform

"We've been able to provide a better end-product to our customers because we've had fewer PC downtime issues, which has improved continuity of service," said Fahr. "Additionally, the management tools for the Pano System are easy-to-use and allow us a significant amount of flexibility, especially when we set up desktops for employees which can now be done in minutes as opposed to hours."

Zenk added, "Pano has given Alphaform greater control over their desktops as well as resulted in time savings in management and cost savings in initial purchase. The best part is that they've just begun. As Alphaform continues to scale out with Pano, they will further increase their savings."

Fahr notes that Alphaform's office environments have improved because of the small size and sleek look of the Pano devices. He adds that Pano devices also have decreased the amount of noise in the office which traditional PCs often generate, contributing to a quieter, more work-conducive atmosphere.

“A very important aspect of implementing Pano is that it allows us to spend less time managing desktops, and more time planning and driving strategic technology initiatives,” said Fahr. “Since Alphaform is committed to using cutting-edge technology for production and services, this is key.”

Scaling Out Pano Devices

Based on the initial success of the Pano deployment, Alphaform will continue to replace traditional PCs with more

Pano devices. The company plans to roll out a broader international deployment throughout 2009, placing more Pano devices in England, Finland and Hungary. Alphaform also plans to place Pano devices in their office in Buchloe, Germany.

“Pano Logic has enabled our IT staff to better service the entire company, who can in turn provide our customers with better service. Pano provides cost and productivity savings to Alphaform, and we look forward to more benefits down the road,” concluded Fahr.