

EMCH+BERGER WSB AG

Emch+Berger WSB AG uses CAD, GIS and other applications for a fixed price from the cloud. Business hosting by the IT service provider Levantis also includes remote management of high-performance IGEL thin clients.



Civil engineering and geomatics services with an eye for the bigger picture – this is the motto of the team of around 100 employees at Emch+Berger WSB AG (EBWSB). With five sites in Central Switzerland, the independent firm within the Emch+Berger Group is a market leader in its field. This is also reflected in EBWSB's cutting-edge ICT concept based on efficient business hosting from the service provider Levantis with thin client solutions from IGEL.



Key Benefits

- A managed desktop per user for a fixed price including thin client management
- Good graphics performance thanks to the IGEL UDC2 software's broad graphics driver support
- Alternative operating system to Windows XP, gentle migration to thin client technology
- Responsible handling of resources: PC hardware only needs to be replaced once it fails a less hardware maintenance and local support hardware engineering
- Real Innovation in the thin client and endpoint management market

SUMMARY

The Customer

- Leading provider of civil engineering and geomatics services in Central Switzerland
- Independent firm within the Emch+Berger Group
- Turnover (including subsidiary firms): 16 million CHF

The Challenge

- Modernizing and consolidating the existing data center infrastructure
- Replacing Windows XP and providing applications including GIS and CAD in an efficient manner
- ITC outsourcing with SaaS and ClaaS (Software/Client as a Service)

The Solution

- Business hosting on the basis of Citrix XenApp and Microsoft Windows Server 2008 R2
- Software-based client standardization: IGEL Universal Desktop Converter 2 (UDC2)
- External remote management: IGEL Universal Management Suite (UMS)

Modernizing and outsourcing ICT...

The new thin client infrastructure is part of a comprehensive project whereby the company's previous data center solution was consolidated, modernized and outsourced to a new IT service provider, Levantis. Levantis' tasks include not only business hosting but also elements of client management. After all, half of the 113 PC workstations were migrated from Windows XP to the IGEL Linux thin client operating system and are now fully remotely administrable as a result. The other half – notebooks, power user PCs and computers with special peripherals – were replaced with new devices running Windows 7 and continue to be managed by the customer.

...with software thin clients from IGEL

One particular feature of the thin client infrastructure is that it is also used to provide resource-intensive CAD and geo-information systems. Levantis' CEO Marco Peyer sees a trend here: "Although they represent only a small part of the overall budget, thin clients play an important role in cloud computing as the savings in client management can be invested in the data center." Levantis chose IGEL Technology as the technological partner for its Desktop as a Service offering. According to Marco Peyer, a key factor here was not only the stability of the Linux thin clients but also the IGEL Universal Management Suite (UMS) remote management solution which comes supplied and allows all hardware and software thin clients from IGEL to be rolled out, remote administered and managed in a standardized manner.

Local conversion, central rollout

The customer converted the Windows XP machines, which were up to nine years old, into Linux thin clients locally. In order to do this, the IGEL Universal Desktop Converter 2 (UDC2) thin client operating system was booted and automatically installed from a local storage device at around 45 workstations at the five sites. This also solved the problem of the forthcoming end of support for Windows XP. Levantis rolled out the individual settings remotely via the IGEL UMS console after the IT partner had set up all the necessary configuration profiles and scanned the network for new IGEL thin clients. According to Marco Peyer, the migration procedure for each workstation took around 20 minutes in total.

CAD and GIS from the cloud

The sector applications which EBWSB has sourced from the private cloud since 2014 demand high performance from the data center. Here, Levantis hosts not only GeoMedia but also Stratis from RIB, Allplan from Nemetschek and MicroStation from Bentley Systems along with measuring solutions from Trimble, Leica and SwissTopo. Emch+Berger also uses the Adobe Creative Suite and Microsoft Office as Software as a Service (SaaS) for a fixed monthly price per user. Levantis provides the technical basis for the smooth presentation and handling of applications with the help of an up-to-date data center infrastructure based on Windows Server 2008 R2 and Citrix XenApp 6.5. In order to offer up to 90 users working simultaneously adequate performance for 2D applications, Levantis provides a total of ten terminal servers with 160 GB RAM and 40 CPUs.

PCs run until the bitter end

On the client side, the lean IGEL UDC2 operating system with its broad spectrum of supported graphics drivers and advanced video modes turns the aging PC hardware into a high-performance Citrix HDX client. Most of the software thin clients operate in dualview mode. Other peripherals such as USB sticks or digital cameras are connected. For Erwin Vogel, Managing Director and the person responsible for IT at Emch+Berger, the partnership with IGEL is paying dividends:

“ Compared to the fat clients, the administrative outlay is virtually zero and IT can concentrate more on the data center.”

According to Erwin Vogel, the biggest operative benefit is the device replacement process, which takes just 30 minutes. "With the converted PCs, we no longer need to worry about maintenance. We run them literally to death before replacing them with thin clients and are able to start using the workstation again straight away."

Verdict: Cloud and thin clients impress

As the number of thin clients increases, the need for on-site support in the cantons of Luzern, Zug and Obwalden is reduced. In order to be able to migrate further fat clients, Levantis is testing Windows-based IGEL thin clients, which also support special peripherals. "IGEL is the first thin client partner that we can rely on completely," said Marco Peyer who now has over 40 business hosting customers with a total of 1,600 users. "We can offer our customers an IGEL UD5 with 24" dualview as a CAD workstation with a clear conscience." Erwin Vogel too is absolutely delighted with the new client model: "We once again have enough flexibility for our heterogeneous client infrastructure. What I particularly like about IGEL thin client solutions is not only their financial benefit but also the way they help to conserve resources. In most cases, the PCs can run until the very end and can then be replaced by a device with a much smaller ecological footprint."

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