

CASE STUDY

Client Virtualization at AmpegaGerling

»WITH FUJITSU'S VIRTUALIZATION SOLUTION, WE WERE ABLE TO INCREASE THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR STOCK MARKET APPLICATIONS BY FIVE TIMES. THE SUPPORT FOR SERVERS AND SOFTWARE IS EXEMPLARY!«

Michael Niewerth, Manager IT Infrastructure, AmpegaGerling



INCREASED OPERATING SECURITY THANKS TO CLIENT VIRTUALIZATION

More than perhaps any other branch, the finance sector depends on reliable performance and system stability. AmpegaGerling, the Financial Services provider of Talanx AG, based in Cologne, has been one of the first in its branch to successfully implement the virtualization of its client landscape. Prior to this, each of the traders used a desktop PC loaded with a range of special applications that run simultaneously and are also hooked up to two 22-inch displays. For at AmpegaGerling, one of the largest independent asset management companies in Germany, each trader must be able to keep an eye on stock market charts, news tickers and video streams – all at once. The goal was to reduce the amount of downtime and to improve performance. The server basis for the client virtualization in the computing centre is provided by four PRIMERGY RX600 S4 servers from Fujitsu, which function reliably and energy-efficiently from the two redundantly configured computing centres in Hanover, 250 kilometres away. At the 70 trading positions, Thin Clients in the FUTRO series are in operation. These energy-saving Fujitsu clients are connected – with high performance – to centrally filed applications and data via the Citrix XenDesktop virtualization solution. Citrix Platinum Partner sepago, which specializes in providing applications for complex IT environments, supported AmpegaGerling in introducing the client virtualization. The FUTRO Thin Clients are also being used at another 330 workplaces within AmpegaGerling, yet these are connected via a classic, server-based computing infrastructure, also from Citrix.

THE CUSTOMER

AmpegaGerling Asset Management GmbH is the Financial Services provider of Talanx AG, Germany's third-largest insurance group.
www.ampegaGerling.de



THE PROJECT

The challenge at AmpegaGerling was to minimize the downtime, increase performance and reduce the overall IT administration requirements for the client landscape.

THE SOLUTION

Using server and client hardware from Fujitsu and virtualization solutions from Citrix, AmpegaGerling was able to significantly reduce administration time and costs. Application performance increased by five times.

CLOSING THE PERFORMANCE GAP

What then are the advantages of the new, virtual client infrastructure at AmpegaGerling? Given that the necessary financial services were centrally supplied in the computing centre in Hanover and the traders had to access them locally, in the past there were delays in both application and display. The speed of data transfer has now been significantly increased, since it now primarily takes place in the computing centre in Hanover: "Thanks to the virtual clients, performance – for example with the highly sophisticated stock market application for our traders, has increased by five times," explains Michael Niewerth, Manager IT Infrastructure at AmpegaGerling. The 400 FUTRO S550 Thin Clients from Fujitsu simply serve as thin end devices to display the user interface and have replaced the previous, fully equipped desktop PCs.

ADVANTAGES FOR THE CUSTOMER

- Speed of stock market applications now five times faster
- Minimized downtime for users
- Reduced administrative time/costs for installation and maintenance
- Maximum data security due to central data storage and the use of Thin Clients

HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, SERVICES

- Rack Server: 4x PRIMERGY RX600 S4, each with 4 Sixcore processors
- Storage Platform: EMC Clariion CX4
- Thin Client: 400x FUTRO S550 with Fujitsu Display P22W-5 ECO IPS
- Desktop Virtualization: Citrix XenDesktop 3.0
- Virtualization Platform: VMware ESX 3.5
- Help Desk services for all components used

REDUCED MAINTENANCE TIME

For Michael Niewerth and his colleagues in the IT department, the introduction of the new solution has an additional advantage: “The amount of maintenance we need to do has been greatly reduced. Maintaining and installing a PC just takes up a lot more time,” Niewerth says. “In our situation of a virtualized environment using Thin Clients, we just put a new end device on the user’s desk and connect it. That’s a lot faster than when you have to set up physical hardware with its own software for each user. Our traders can’t afford any downtime – they need a new, fully-functional workplace environment – immediately.”

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT

The virtual client landscape at AmpegaGerling is provided for end users via Citrix XenDesktop. The applications and updates can be managed centrally in the computing centre. However, there is also a security-related aspect that has significance role to play here: “It’s not possible for viruses to enter the system via employees. You can rule that out with Thin Clients,” Michael Niewerth says happily. That’s because, instead of a hard drive, the FUTRO S550 from Fujitsu is equipped with a flash memory which the Linux-based embedded operating system (“eLux”) runs on. For hosting the virtual clients, AmpegaGerling uses the virtualization platform VMware ESX 3.5, which has already proved its worth in the server virtualization. This software operates very harmoniously with the Fujitsu Rack Servers, which provides an additional advantage for the integrated Help Desk along with the new virtual client infrastructure for AmpegaGerling. As Project Manager Michael Niewerth reports:

“THE QUALITY OF THE FUJITSU SERVER SYSTEMS IS VERY GOOD. BUT WE’RE ALSO ABSOLUTELY THRILLED WITH THE SUPPORT FOR THEM. THAT WAS A DECISIVE POINT FOR US. WE GET SUPPORT FOR SERVERS AND SOLUTIONS FROM A SINGLE SOURCE.”

Summing up, he says: “In this respect, the other manufacturers couldn’t really keep up. With Fujitsu, the support for servers and VMware works very well together.” Sometimes it’s difficult to locate the source of the disruption, to find out if the cause is a hardware or software error.

EXPANSION PLANNED

Given that the user acceptance level is extremely high and the Thin Client solution has proved its effectiveness, AmpegaGerling now plans to expand the virtualization project. The Risk Control department will be the next to be upgraded to the use of FUTRO S550, so that here too users won’t have to wait any longer than necessary for the maintenance of their workplace hardware. Here too, in the future, a Thin Client will simply be taken from the pool and put into operation on the employee’s desk without the need for a major installation.



CONTACT

Fujitsu Technology Solutions
 Customer Interaction Centre
 Mo. – Fr. 8 am – 6 pm
 E-Mail: cic@ts.fujitsu.com
 Telephone: +49 (0) 1805-372 900
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