Communication: the first step towards security

Commend International GmbH is a leading provider of systems for security and communication. Commend offers comprehensive and compact intercom communication in a variety of environments – both networked and standalone.

The company, based in Salzburg, sells its custom security and communication solutions to protect people, buildings and assets in more than 59 countries worldwide. Its customers include public road transport institutions, airports, hospitals, building security, car parks, and many more. Founded in 1971, the family-owned company draws on more than 40 years of experience in research, development and 'Made in Austria' production. With over 200 employees at its Salzburg headquarters and more than 450 employees worldwide, as well as 23 subsidiaries and partners, the IT admin team has its work cut out: Martin Posch, senior IT manager at Commend, and his second in command Wolfgang Zimmel, are currently responsible for project management, IT purchasing, conceptual design, and second level support at Commend. Another three colleagues work in SAP, first level support, and client deployment.

Commend manages on-premise a total of about 250 clients, distributed over roughly 200 servers in the development and test environment. Just under 10 percent run Linux or iOS, the rest Windows 10. For their daily work, almost two thirds of users work on laptops leased in a three-year cycle. By default, all devices are equipped with Office packages, antivirus software, VPN applications and SAP clients.

Switching to Windows 10 makes new solutions essential
"In the past, our endpoint management was supported using another commercial software solution. Unfortunately in everyday practice it turned out that the associated support service

was insufficient for our purposes. This became especially evident when switching to Windows 10. The program's agent automatically and categorically stopped the operating system when accessing Microsoft servers. As a result, our developers were severely hampered in their work. Updates could not be installed without errors, WSUS functions were altered and the transfer of system data and error reports by Windows 10 was completely prohibited. To put it simply, the existing system was floored by Windows 10," says Wolfgang Zimmel. To solve the patch management and Windows 10 problems, Commend looked for an alternative.

"The search for a new solution was made easier by the fact that some of our IT staff already had positive experiences with baramundi from their previous employers. After testing the 30-day full version, we were immediately convinced! The simple, intuitive design under a unified dashboard meant we didn't need lots of training. Software packages could be assembled easily and logically using the modular system," continues Wolfgang Zimmel. "The entire system was fully operational after just two days, including the basic configuration and roll-out of the baramundi agent, so we could continue to work practically seamlessly in the company. Since then, we have been intensively using the combination of the vulnerability scanner and automated patch management and simple software distribution."

Communication: the answer to the challenges of mobility
"The large number of laptop users has long been a challenge for our IT department. Because connectivity is not always available when working on the move, it was difficult to keep devices up to date through regularly scheduled maintenance windows. Users often removed their computer from the docking station during an update, causing it to disconnect," says Wolfgang Zimmel. "Emailing users to inform them about the problem did not have the desired success, because for many users an email from IT admins does not have a particularly high priority." For Martin Posch and Wolfgang Zimmel, it was clear that a new approach was needed to communicate with users. "The extensive automation functions in the baramundi Management Suite ultimately provided us with the necessary tool to get through to users. Instead of just sending emails, we could now display our own awareness messages on the Windows 10 lock screen

in lieu of landscape pictures." This simple and ingenious way of direct communication proved to be extremely successful. "We now automatically distribute reminders about essential updates, warnings about current phishing attempts, malware waves and ransomware Trojans. In particular the reference to necessary updates has proved effective. Many users are now using the option to install updates when it is most convenient for them and they do not need their computer. We are currently working on expanding the concept with the new baramundi Kiosk and also making selected programs available as self-service jobs," continues Martin Posch.

Preparing for growth with efficient work

"Switching to baramundi has already saved us a lot of routine work. The Automation Studio is especially ingenious: we had a case where as a customer of a software provider we were asked to run a license script on all our computers to record the installations we had. What would otherwise have taken several days of work, we were able to implement within 30 minutes thanks to the bMS – including distribution, execution and cleanly documented collection of the results. In addition, we were automatically informed where the script failed and were able to react quickly."

Despite the rapid growth of our company and the proportionally increasing workload, Martin Posch's team has no problem keeping the Commend network under control thanks to automation. "Automated software distribution makes it easy for us to provide all PCs with a 'wellness package' without disturbing users while they work. Time needed to redo work has also been shortened considerably, since jobs fail much less often now."

Conclusion

"We are extremely satisfied with our current solution. The baramundi Management Suite is comparatively easy to use and so logically structured that even less frequently used functions can be used quickly without needing lots of training. If in doubt, we simply take a look at the baramundi forum. The community already has a solution for most issues. In the past two years, we only had to get help from the support hotline twice and were assisted straight away," sums up Wolfgang Zimmel.