

Right out at the very front

Microsoft's communications solutions in use at hhpberlin

hhpberlin is one of Germany's leading fire protection companies. The company, which was founded in 1999, and has its headquarters in Berlin, currently employs 100 members of staff. It is active in the development of fire protection strategies for both national and international specialist construction projects. At first glance this might not appear to be the obvious place to implement Microsoft's very latest IP-based communications solutions. However, unconventional solutions had to be found to enable the company to meet the exacting demands of managing more than 1000 complex projects every year. These range from the main rail station and O2 World in Berlin to the Frankfurt airport extension and Hamburg's Hafencity. "Our staff spend around 30% of their working lives on the road, and spend another 40% of their working day acquiring and processing information – this situation was less than satisfactory for everyone involved", says Managing Director Stefan Truthän. In the first quarter of 2008, as it became clear that two new sites in Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg would join the existing subsidiary in Munich, it became time to consider investing in new, digital communications solutions. According to Truthän, "The key question was to find out which IT strategy would best represent our company's aims?"

Out there, together with you

hhpberlin wanted an easily scalable VoIP solution that would not only give its rapidly growing workforce full mobility, and encourage the use of global team structures, but also give them faster and easier access to the information they require. Unified Communications was the requirement, and the answer, according to the NTeam consultants, was Microsoft. As administrative effort was to be kept to a minimum, the external sites were not to be given separate telephone installations. The current "state of the art" solution is based on Microsoft Office Communications Server, Microsoft Exchange 2007 and VoIP Mediagateways from Ferrari electronic. The subsidiaries are connected to the headquarters in Berlin by 100 MBit fixed lines. The Ferrari electronic gateways provide each location with regional telephone numbers and guarantee the connection to the POTS network in Berlin.

The focus of this changeover was the requirement to regain control of the multitude of communication paths. Now, every member of staff has a central telephone number via which they can be contacted at any site. Presence functionality provides a quick overview and shows who can be contacted at any one time. Each member of staff can use Microsoft Communicator to access the CRM and their e-mails. The suggestion was also made that fax communications should be digitised to avoid media interruptions, and to give faster access to the necessary information. The company now uses OfficeMaster for Exchange 2007 from Ferrari electronic to access its fax messages via Outlook whilst on the move. This new holistic solution is rounded off by Microsoft Roundtable for 360 degree video conferencing. According to hhpberlin, the savings achieved by not having to make just two of these business trips have already paid for this solution.



Figure: Fire protection in the railway stations in Berlin – main railway station shown here – provided by experts from hhpberlin. Source: hhpberlin

Targets fulfilled

hhpberlin had a clear idea of the path they wanted to follow: They wanted to make best possible use of the effects of synergy created by the centralised provision of resources and pooling of tasks. Stefan Truthän has been convinced by the result: "We are now able to give each of our colleagues the information they need, any time and anywhere. This then gives them the time and space they need to concentrate on their projects. The changeover involved costs of around Euro 25,000, which

is about the same price as *one* traditional telephone exchange – that had none of the new unified communications functionality!"



Figure: One of hhpberlin's many large-scale projects: Virtual view of O2 world in Berlin. Source: O2