SUCCESS STORY

Brocade Helps Netzlink Achieve Three-Minute Cloud Service Provisioning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Challenge

- Significantly reduce provisioning time for cloud services
- Implement a modular and cost-effective network solution aligned with the company's software-defined networking (SDN) vision
- Leverage OpenStack for maximum flexibility and interoperability
- Establish a self-service portal enabling customers to administer their cloud services themselves

Solution

- Brocade SAN switches for storage systems
- Brocade IP solutions in the datacenter, core, and access areas
- Brocade VDX switches as an important part of Netzlink's software-designed datacenter concept

Results

- Cloud service provisioning time reduced from 4 hours to 3 minutes
- Provisioning costs reduced by 90 percent
- Increased customer satisfaction and loyalty thanks to self-service portal allowing customers to provision their services whenever necessary

Netzlink Informationstechnik GmbH

As an established IT system house, Netzlink designs, plans and implements data centers of any size for its customers throughout Germany and enables them to evolve by adding new services to their portfolio.

Challenge

Founded in 1997, Netzlink Informationstechnik GmbH is an international IT service provider based in Germany. It has about 90 staff members at its six offices in Braunschweig, Hamburg, Hanover, Kassel, Paderborn and Frankfurt. Netzlink is also at the heart of the Grouplink initiative, an alliance of 21 system house partners located throughout Germany, Poland, Switzerland and Austria. Netzlink wanted to reduce the time it takes to provision new cloud services for its customers—some of whom are cloud providers themselves—and provide a portal that would enable them to manage and extend their networks themselves. In looking for a suitable vendor partner, Netzlink focused on those that were committed to OpenStack for interoperability and to a software-defined network approach that moves the network's value and intelligence from the hardware to the software.

The Software-defined Network: Brocade and Netzlink Make It a Reality

Serving budget-conscious markets like local authorities, town councils, start-ups and other industries, Netzlink offers a full range of services ranging from consulting and planning to development, integration and personalized maintenance. In recent years, the company has been focused on making datacenter services more flexible and cost-effective for its customers. Small and midsized organizations increasingly require cloud services that can be turned on and off on demand to suit the needs of a particular workload at a particular time. At the same time, these organizations need to make the best use of their staff and financial resources. The high level of connectivity, availability and scalability required by its customer base led Netzlink to look for a modular and cost-effective network solution aligned with its software-defined networking (SDN) vision.

OpenStack—Essential to Avoid Vendor Lock-in

To ensure maximum flexibility and interoperability, Netzlink also required an OpenStack-enabled network infrastructure that would allow the company and its

customers a broader choice of solutions and—most importantly—eliminate vendor lock-in. OpenStack enables interoperability between different vendor clouds and facilitates seamless management between private and public clouds.

Netzlink had been working with OEM storage area network (SAN) solutions made by Brocade and sold by IBM/Lenovo since 2002, so Brocade was one of the first vendors it evaluated.

"During the evaluation phase, we took a close look at the vendors' strategies as well as their solutions' technical suitability," comments Sven-Ove Wähling, CEO of Netzlink. "We wanted to work with a vendor who was as committed to OpenStack and software-defined networking as we are. With Brocade, we have a partner that has made significant investments in OpenStack and SDN. Brocade is more advanced in the SDN arena than any other vendor—and that was one of the reasons we selected them."

Availability, Performance and Scalability

With small and midsized organizations making up the bulk of its customer base, Netzlink recognized the need to provide network solutions with the highest levels of flexibility, enabling SMEs to capitalize on their agility advantages compared to larger enterprises. "The top technical criteria guiding our product selection were the availability, performance and scalability," says Christina Jakobsen, Product Manager for Networks and IT Security at Netzlink. "Today's networks need to be open and fast, but customers should also be able to expand their network and add new services to it quickly and cost-effectively."

Self-service Portal for Extra Control

Netzlink's cloud vision is based on the premise that the datacenter should be fully automated on every level. That implies complete virtualization—from servers and storage to the network itself. The company also knows that its customers want to be able to administer their cloud services themselves, so it added a self-service portal to the list of selection criteria.

"Self-service is only feasible if every layer is fully automated," notes Christina Jakobsen. "Along with giving customers more control, automation delivers significant cost benefits as the amount of manual intervention is minimized and services can be delivered faster."

Working with Brocade, Netzlink developed a state-of-the-art, software-defined datacenter (SDD) in Braunschweig. In May 2016, the two companies inaugurated the new center with an event for customers and Grouplink partners, showing live demos of the software-defined network based on Brocade switches. Today, this SDD is used to offer Netzlink customers superlative services at a competitive price. It has implemented Brocade IP solutions in the datacenter, core and access areas, as well as Brocade VDX switches for the SDN and cloud connectivity services.

WHY BROCADE

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> — Sven-Ove Wähling, CEO at Netzlink

Three-minute Cloud Service Provisioning and 90 percent Cost Savings

Since the Brocade-based SDN went live, Netzlink has seen a marked increase in customer satisfaction and loyalty. "And that's hardly surprising, looking at the benefits!" notes Sven-Ove Wähling. "It now takes just 3 minutes to provision a new cloud service, compared to 4 hours previously. That equates to cost savings of 90 percent as there's virtually no manual intervention—it's all automated. Customers really like the self-service portal too as it gives them more control. We and our customers and partners are very happy with the Brocade SDN—and we're already working with Brocade on developing additional innovative solutions. Watch this space!"

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