

Gebäudeversicherung Bern (GVB) is a leading Swiss building insurance company that relies on a high-performing virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) to help employees do their jobs efficiently. When its legacy spinning-disk storage system failed to keep pace with the demands of their VDI environment, a Pure Storage® FlashArray was purchased as a replacement. Today, response times for applications are much faster, IT processes are completed in far less time, and the company has a solid foundation for future expansion.

**BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION**

Employees throughout the company have faster and more reliable access to the key applications needed to do their jobs. Storage management tasks for the IT department have been reduced to almost nothing.

GEO

Switzerland

INDUSTRY

Insurance

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Nils Wenger,
Head of Operations and Support

GEBÄUDEVERSICHERUNG BERN FINDS THE RIGHT POLICY WITH A PURE STORAGE ARRAY

Gebäudeversicherung Bern (GVB) has insured all buildings in the canton of Bern, Switzerland, for over 200 years. In order to provide the company's more than 200 internal clerks and 160 external assessors access to productivity-enhancing applications, GVB has deployed a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) using VMware Horizon. Virtual desktops are generated anew each time a user logs in. Two golden images are employed to automate replication, and applications are managed and assigned using Microsoft AppLocker.

With an average of 220 employees accessing applications through their VDI system every day, a large volume of data needs to be written and read. “As a building insurer it is important for us to provide quick and direct help when a claim is made,” explained Nils Wenger, Head of Operations and Support, GVB.

PURE STORAGE ARRAY MEETS ALL REQUIREMENTS

When the maintenance contract for its spinning-disk storage system expired and upgrades to meet changing requirements were exhausted, GVB's IT department sought a new solution. It evaluated both hybrid and all-flash solutions from several providers, focusing on innovative, future-oriented technology and relevant customer references.

GVB chose a FlashArray//M50 from Pure Storage. In a direct comparison, neither the hybrid nor all-flash solutions from its incumbent provider were able to meet key requirements, particularly in the area of deduplication and data compression.

GVB's system-integration partner, BNC Business Network Communications AG, was commissioned to purchase and install the Pure Storage array. Configuration was extremely simple, and the system was ready for operation within a few hours.

The Pure Storage array has appreciably changed end-users' everyday work. While GVB's hard-disk-based system operated with high latency levels between 10 and 20 ms, the Pure Storage system consistently achieves latency below 0.5 ms, even during peak usage times. Data is being compressed at a factor of around 7:1. “The technology has impressed us in every respect. The data is written once only, and that naturally has enormous repercussions on the entire system,” said Wenger.

COMPANY:

Gebäudeversicherung Bern
www.gvb.ch

USE CASE:

- VDI – VMware® Horizon®

CHALLENGES:

- High latencies were reducing the responsiveness of key applications running on VDI.
- Storage management was complex and time-consuming.

IT TRANSFORMATION:

- Latencies have been reduced from as much as 20 ms to less than 1 ms.
- Replication time of golden images has been slashed from 15 to 1 minute.
- VDI server backups can now be performed during business hours.

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Time savings are also very noticeable for the IT team. Replication of the golden images, some of which are 50GB in size, used to take an average of 15 minutes; today, it is around one minute. Compute-intensive tasks, such as system updates and rollouts of new software, take considerably less time thanks to Pure Storage. Previously, system backup took up to five hours and was not possible during business hours. Now, this task can be performed in an hour during daily operation without impairing performance.

STORAGE MANAGEMENT REQUIRES VIRTUALLY NO EFFORT

Another positive effect of the switchover to Pure Storage is that management of the storage system requires virtually no effort. Once a day the resource distribution is checked; not much more needs to be done. Since being installed in September 2015, the system has run without any failures. “You very quickly get used to it running efficiently. For us it’s always a good sign when we hear nothing from the clerks or the external teams. Because when there are problems, they contact us immediately. It is good to see that you can commission a system without any concerns. It simply runs,” noted Nils Wenger.

The new Pure Storage array will enable GVB to further optimize and develop its VDI. Plans include, among other things, virtualizing its CAD workstations, which will benefit from Pure Storage’s high write rate. Even with the simultaneous operation of 320 virtual machines performing latency-free at peak demand times, the Pure Storage array still has sufficient capacity to support further expansion.

GVB initially used the Pure Storage array for a portion of its workloads. The IT team now plans to move all remaining servers and data onto an expanded Pure Storage array, based on its high satisfaction with the installed 5 TB system. During a proof-of-concept, the cloning of the productive SAP system was reduced from 1 hour 10 minutes to only 4 minutes.

“At present the new storage infrastructure is still slowed down by the old system. It functions as a data pool that connects the virtual workstations by means of folder directions in the VDI,” Wenger noted. When the full migration to Pure Storage is completed, he anticipates a further performance increase and a noticeable improvement for end-users.

“The innovative technology of Pure Storage has really thrilled us in administration,” Wenger added. “It not only delivers exceptional performance and reliability, but extremely easy system management provides the final touch for the overall package. It was the right decision to choose Pure Storage.”



info@purestorage.com
www.purestorage.com/customers