



Case Study: **Utility Sector: Vorarlberger Illwerke AG & IBC Solar AG**

Innovative Energy Generation with Empirum

In the energy industry, change is the only constant. New technologies and innovations provide continuous market disruption, creating big challenges, and opportunities, for industry players. To thrive, companies in the energy sector must be incredibly flexible, agile and dynamic. This means the company's software and systems must also be dynamic and support rapid change and growth. That's why the selection of the right systems management software is critical for business success.

Matrix42 Empirum is the central component of a successful IT management approach and the only solution that can be fully integrated with all IT management processes – from initial installation to administration and the secure deletion of all data.



Empirum allows for the complete, centralized, and efficient management of all corporate PCs, servers, configurations and software assets (both Windows and Linux). Matrix42 Empirum can be fully integrated with existing IT infrastructures.

Comprehensive capabilities to automate user support and PC operations help to achieve measurable cost reductions. Empirum provides the leading-edge technology for completely automated content and software distribution via networks or the Internet. Empirum can be used to easily distribute, install and modify all components of a PC workstation – operating system, drivers, applications, driver connections, policies etc. – and also all personal settings and data.



► IBC Solar AG

IBC Solar AG, a photovoltaic company, was founded more than 20 years ago and has become an established player in the German and international energy markets. IBC has implemented more than 60,000 photovoltaic systems all over the world. Today, the company has 260 employees at three locations in Germany and Spain and generates revenues of 550 million Euros per year.

illwerke vkw

► Illwerke VKW

The Illwerke generate peak-load and baseload power in their alpine storage power plants. Besides fulfilling essential energy-related functions for their contracting partners within the European supply network, the Illwerke also carry out engineering tasks. VKW is the biggest energy service company in the Vorarlberg region of Austria and the region's most important infrastructure provider.

“The energy sector is a very dynamic and innovative industry, which requires flexible and adaptive software. Matrix42 Empirum is exactly the systems management solution that we have been looking for.”

Marcus Band
Head of IT at IBC, Staffelstein



Challenge

In view of the company's high growth rates, IBC Solar AG's IT department is facing continuous challenges. Setting up new workplaces consumes a lot of resources, which are urgently needed for other activities.

Solution

The Matrix42 system management solution is now used to deploy the computers of new employees automatically. Empirum's remote installation feature allows the IT department to set up the workplaces centrally and independent of their location with a few mouse-clicks. In Germany and other European states the utilities sector is gaining increasing relevance. Today, eco-friendly energy generation methods such as photovoltaics or hydropower are becoming more and more important. For companies in this market fast and flexible responses – to changing conditions, new compliance requirements or technical innovations – are extremely important. But to be able to respond flexibly, a company must have the respective structures, where IT processes and dependencies are playing an increasingly important role, which explains why the selection and usage of appropriate software can be a competitive differentiator.

IBC Solar AG: Becoming a Leader with Photovoltaics

Marcus Band is head of corporate IT at IBC Solar AG based in Bad Staffelstein in Franconia, Germany and knows why hardware and software are so important for daily operations. IBC is a company with an extremely high growth rate and various domestic and international locations. For the head of the IT department this means that new workplaces have to be set up frequently, and not only in the corporate headquarters. Up to five new employees are hired each month, not to mention the new hires in the company's international subsidiaries. “We were facing a challenge which could not be addressed with traditional means. Due to our strong growth, we had to say good-bye to traditional ‘on-site support’ and switch to software-based IT service provisioning”, says Marcus Band.

Empirum, the Central Component

Together with his team, Marcus Band created a requirements document for the desired systems management solution. The team conducted research and analyses on various IT systems management solutions and selected Matrix42 Empirum in a grassroots decision in summer 2008. Since then, IBC has not only set up the new workplaces with Empirum, but has also used the software to standardize and automate their processes. “Empirum is the central component of a successful IT management and the only solution that can be fully integrated with our corporate processes”, says Band. Empirum helps him to always have a full overview and be able to respond faster and easier in case a problem occurs. No matter if a computer failure occurs in the Spanish subsidiary or if the CEO's laptop is down: There is a defined procedure used to handle the various support cases, and therefore, it is always possible for the support staff to log in remotely to solve the problem. “Since we have been using Empirum, we can ensure global support, even if our headquarters in Germany are closed for a holiday – in such case, colleagues, for instance, in Spain, will provide help”, the IT director sums up. Now, his 11 specialists can again focus on their essential tasks, rather than being burdened with bothersome “click work”. Additionally, interruptions during which one of the more than 260 employees had to do without his or her computer, have been minimized – which in turn increases employee productivity rates.

Higher Transparency with Service Store

Recently, IBC has also started to use the Matrix42 Service Store, a modular solution that relies on standardized processes – it links technical and business data in a way that provides an even higher degree of transparency of corporate IT environments. “Service management provides final clarity on applications in use. Tickets can be resolved even faster through the help desk, and traditional software requests can be handled in an online-shopping manner,” explains Band. Using the Matrix42 service and systems management products has not only increased his own satisfaction, but also the satisfaction of his users. They receive answers to their questions more quickly, problems are resolved through remote support, and software can be ordered via the Service Catalog as easily as via Amazon. “Today, it is still the same two ultimate arguments that convinced us of the Matrix42 solution last year: the optimum connection between service and systems management and the excellent mapping of the IT workflow. And, as a matter of course, the ITIL V3 certification of the Service Catalog also plays a role in an industry such as the utilities sector”, says Band. He can very well imagine using additional Matrix42 products, such as Personal Backup or security solutions, in his company.



“Seven years ago, it took courage to decide against a free Microsoft solution and in favor of a paid systems management solution from a German vendor, about which we did not know anything – but it was definitely more than worthwhile! Today, we are still benefitting from this decision.”

Martin Seeberger
Head of IT, Illwerke, Vorarlberg

Illwerke Vorarlberg: Innovative and Eco-Friendly

Illwerke Vorarlberg were the very first Matrix42 customer in Austria. Illwerke has used Empirum since 2003 – with great success. “At that time, the merger between Illwerke and Vorarlberger Kraftwerke was impending. We knew that we had to define a corporate IT standard for this purpose”, Martin Seeberger, head of IT at Illwerke, remembers.

Decision in Favor of Empirum

Until then, a free systems management solution by Microsoft had been used and the company thought about purchasing Intel software. Why did things turn out differently? The systems management solution by Matrix42 is an absolutely open system that could be integrated immediately with Illwerke’s unique software landscape. “We decided to use Empirum, although we had not known Matrix42 at that time and had to pay for a systems management software for the first time”, remembers Seeberger. This decision was based on a comprehensive analysis of various systems management solutions, including both the technical and business aspects. The fast ROI proved that his assessment was right. Within shortest time, the initial costs had paid off. Now and then, immediate time-savings were perceived; Matrix42, as a customer-oriented German vendor, always has a focus on customer requirements. This close partnership between Matrix42 and Illwerke is also reflected in the specific “agent” developed by Matrix42 for Illwerke. “Since at that time the Empirum-integrated agent did not address our requirements profile one hundred percent, Matrix42 has programmed an agent that does exactly match our individual situation”, explains Seeberger. Meanwhile, many of these specific features have been integrated into the current version of Matrix42 Empirum v12, and there are considerations to switch to the new standard agent. Today, Seeberger and his team of IT experts are in charge of more than 1300 devices – a task which could not have been handled based on the company’s former IT structure.

“When we migrated to the Windows XP operating system in mid-2003, the benefits of Empirum became more than obvious: Individual steps are automated, which saves time and resources”, says Seeberger. A potential migration to Windows 7 does not cause him any headaches – after all, he has distributed more than 240 software packages via Empirum across the company. Empirum features such as automatic hardware detection and online updates of the driver database have been particularly helpful. Matrix42 is also used for inventory and patch management purposes, which maximizes client security. “Our goal has been and still is to optimize IT processes, while improving transparency. The Matrix42 portfolio helps us to measure and control our processes easily via a centralized platform, which saves time and money”.

Easier IT Orders

The Austrian company has added the Matrix42 Service Catalog to the automation and standardization solutions, which provides even more transparency to the employees when it comes to IT processes and interrelations, while also ensuring shorter service times and easier IT orders – with 1300 devices being used in the company, this sums up to quite a workload every day. “The Matrix42 products have convinced us, as have the good cooperation and, last but not least, the price – in 2002 and still today”, says Seeberger.

► Challenge

After the power market liberalization in Austria was completed in 2000, the major parts of the federal state of Vorarlberg cooperated to establish the Illwerke utilities. Later, two utilities companies, Illwerke and Vorarlberger Kraftwerke, were merged. The newly founded company did not only have to cope with common difficulties arising in the wake of such merger, but also needed to consolidate the two IT structures, which posed great challenges.

► Solution

Matrix42 Empirum helped the IT management to implement a stable and standardized corporate IT environment within six months. Matrix42 Empirum is a systems management solution with open interfaces, which was particularly helpful to ensure the seamless integration with the company’s specific software solutions. The very fast ROI ensured the project’s long-term success.

TAP Desktop Solutions GmbH

TAP Desktop Solutions, as a desktop management specialist, designs and implements client-related concepts and solutions for its customer base, which is mostly made up of medium-sized businesses and public sector organizations. Based on the company slogan "the solution is always easy, you just have to find it", the TAP IT experts develop individual solution concepts that can be seamlessly integrated with the customer's business processes. Meanwhile, Michael Krause, TAP Managing Director, and his team also work for a number of utilities companies. "Today, TAP's customers include about 90 companies and public-sector organizations across all sizes. About 100,000 clients are managed with Matrix42 solutions", says Michael Krause. "More than ever, companies are under pressure to ensure the transparency of their corporate IT processes and reduce breaks in communications. Matrix42's integrated service and systems management solutions are ideal to address these challenges; they link business and technical data to provide relevant, complete information, making life easier for IT administrators, business managers and users alike."

TAP acted as central contract at IBC Solar and Vorarlberger Illwerke during all steps of the Matrix42 implementation project, from the initial presentation to implementation and training. Together, current processes were analyzed to determine and realize optimization potential.

About Matrix42

Matrix42 is the leading supplier for Workplace Management solutions. Matrix42 Workplace Management enables the seamless management of physical, virtual and mobile environments. It combines Client Lifecycle, Cloud, SaaS, Virtualization and Service Management into a holistic solution enabling users to have transparent access to their data and services everywhere, from any virtual or physical device at any time. Founded in 1992, Matrix42, with headquarters near Frankfurt Germany, has been established in the dynamic IT market for almost 20 years. Over 3 million clients are managed by Matrix42 software at more than 1,500 customers worldwide including market-leading enterprises such as Infineon, Magna, Lufthansa Systems and Puma and integrators like T-Systems, Raiffeisen IT, msg systems and Bechtle. In early 2008, Matrix42 became part of the Asseco Group. With over 8,000 employees and a market capitalization of around 1.2 billion Euros, Asseco is one of the largest European software companies.



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