

CUSTOMER PROFILE



Automation makes 100 percent network availability possible



With more than 12,000 employees and a turnover of more than 12 billion Swiss Francs, Swisscom is Switzerland's leading telecommunications company. The group has locations throughout Switzerland providing the full range of products and services for mobile, network, and IP-based voice and data communication. Its extensive portfolio of services also includes the management of communication infrastructures. Swisscom has recently set up its new Event Solutions business for managing temporary ICT network installations at public events.

Even before setting up this new business, Swisscom proved its mettle with a faultless performance at two major sporting events. Swisscom's corporate customer business set up and monitored in-stadium telephone and Internet networks during both the 2008 European Soccer Championships—the second-largest sporting event in the world—and the 2009 World Ice Hockey Championships. The crucial requirement was the ability to deliver 100 percent network availability, which Swisscom satisfied at both events. It was no surprise then that both UEFA and the IIHF, the International Ice Hockey Association, came away satisfied. Adrian Dietrich, Senior Application Engineer at Swisscom, was pleased too and commented, "All the feedback we received was positive."

High flexibility on demand

The network provided Internet and telephone access for official journalists, sponsors, VIPs, and FIFA/IIHF members at the stadium. The complexity of these networks reflected the importance of both these events. At Euro '08, Swisscom monitored some 1,300 ISDN lines and 700 DSL connections. Swisscom installed 13 kilometers of fiber optic cables in the stadiums in Basel, Zurich, Bern, and Geneva.

The real challenge lay not in the complexity of the network, but in ensuring that the management of the network remained sufficiently flexible. New demands arose constantly, not only in the period leading up to the European Championships, but also during the event. Throughout the three weeks of the tournament, the network had to be modified on several occasions, such as when new sponsors needed Internet access or UEFA decided to increase its own representation onsite.

Automation is a decisive factor for ensuring market success

Swisscom's own Adrian Dietrich soon realized that under these conditions, basic monitoring software would not be enough. He chose EMC® lonix™ for IT Operations instead. "In particular, the extensive automation of EMC lonix proved to be a key reason for its successful deployment at Euro 2008 and the Ice Hockey World Championships. It was the crucial factor in ensuring 100 percent network uptime despite the demands for flexibility," said Dietrich, outlining its benefits.

The solution's automated discovery feature ensured that the constant modifications to the network only involved a minimum of workload. EMC lonix for IT Operations automatically recognizes new network components and modifications and integrates them into the monitoring process by itself. In this way, despite the high flexibility that was required, network management was always up-to-date.

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Senior Application Engineer
Swisscom Schweiz AG**

Error handling also benefits from automated discovery. Root-cause analysis always uses the most recent data discovery, a process which is also automated. In other scenarios, highly-qualified specialists need to be familiar with the current status of the network down to the very last detail and must trace individual error messages back to their causes. In this case, the EMC tool does all this itself.

In the total of five serious incidents which arose during the tournament, the automated root-cause analysis was crucial for quick error recovery. Dietrich can readily recall an example, “The hotspot in the VIP area wasn’t functioning after some power supply issues caused a switch to fail and triggered a cascade of errors. Despite being overwhelmed with error messages, the operator was still able to discover the source of the fault. Within 15 minutes, an onsite technician had detected, and even resolved, the problem with the power supply allowing the technicians to return to normal service.”

This rapid, targeted response was facilitated by EMC Ionix for IT Operations’ intuitive console. Not only can the operator use it to display alerts, it also displays additional important information in a concise and easy-to-read format. This included the current backbone status and the current network load in the stadiums and enabled the operator to see, at a glance, when journalists began to leave the media centre and head for their positions in the stands prior to kick-off. “This is very important information for prioritizing alarm messages,” adds Dietrich.

Big challenges at limited expense

EMC Ionix for IT Operations was not only technically persuasive, it also made economic sense. Automation increases flexibility and also reduces implementation and troubleshooting expenditure. “Without EMC Ionix, fault identification would easily have required a dozen employees. In addition, implementation would have taken at least twice as long,” was Adrian Dietrich’s convinced assessment.

For Dietrich, the solution offers unique benefits, “I know of nothing that can compare to it.” For this reason, EMC Ionix for IT Operations will not only see increasing use at events, but also for monitoring permanent network installations. Projects are already up and running with the aim of making the solution the standard product for end-to-end management of networks in Swisscom AG’s corporate customer business.



EMC Corporation
Hopkinton
Massachusetts
01748-9103
1-508-435-1000
In North America 1-866-464-7381
www.EMC.com

EMC Computer Systems AG
Hardturmstrasse 181
CH-8005 Zürich
+41 (0)43 / 444 66 66
www.emc2.ch