Solar pioneers from Wagner Solartechnik focus on the sun and their network

Wagner & Co Solartechnik monitors corporate IT across all locations with PRTG Network Monitor

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> IT Manager Infrastructure and Communication
> and member of the supervisory board
> at Wagner Solartechnik

Staying on top of things

Solar plants are extremely reputable, using high-tech products for the generation of electricity and heat; the demands on the quality of the products and the flexibility of the service are high. This requires equally high quality in all production and logistics processes in the company, including the IT infrastructure that supports it.

Wagner Solartechnik operates a heterogeneously grown IT network over 6 countries, with dozens of different components from switches to routers and Windows servers to web monitored temperature sensors.

"Ensuring the availability and smooth interaction of these diverse components across all locations from the company headquarters in Cölbe was not feasible in the long term without a uniform network monitoring solution. This cross-site monitoring should be solved with a single software, if possible," says Detlef Schwenke, IT Manager Infrastructure and Communication and member of the supervisory board, describing the challenge for the IT department of Wagner Solartechnik.

One monitoring solution for everything?

The hardware environment at Wagner Solartechnik is typical for a growing, medium-sized company. A DS4300 from IBM as central storage medium, a virtual environment (VMware) on two IBM servers in combination with 7 physical Citrix servers, as well as multiple individual servers including database, fax and back-up servers. In addition, there are numerous switches, routers, firewalls, a Wimax radio link and a few exotic devices such as measurement boxes for temperature and fire monitoring in the server rooms and the Mobotix surveillance cameras.

All of these systems should be monitored with the help of a single solution.

A central server had been planned for this task for a long time. The IT team at Wagner Solartechnik was looking for a network monitoring solution that could monitor all their systems, which was scalable, had good usablity, stability, versatility, easy commissioning and of course was good value for money.

PRTG NETWORK MONITOR

PRTG Network Monitor: Step-by-step more visibility

The IT department became aware of the Paessler AG solution due to the positive product test results PRTG Network Monitor achieved. After a very short test phase the decision for PRTG was made.

"Thanks to the intuitive interface, the installation of the software was done as and when required", explains Detlef Schwenke. Nothing had to be adapted during the installation of the software, except for the paths. PRTG was running out-of-the-box. "Step-by-step we added the components to be monitored and now monitor almost everything in our network using around 1,095 PRTG sensors – and the trend is constantly increasing".

When technical questions arise regarding the connection of additional systems and components, Paessler's support offers great advice, like they are part of the team – administrators at Wagner Solartechnik were able to communicate directly with Paessler's IT specialists.

Most systems are monitored via WMI. The Windows servers could be included in the monitoring very quickly and special services are monitored depending on the server. Switches, routers and other devices are monitored via SNMP. The company's VMware environment is also included in the monitoring.

External networks in the branch offices are monitored with remote probes, which transmit all detected data SSL encrypted to the core server in the central data center. Thus, the IT department in Cölbe has a permanent overview of all locations.

Sensors for every requirement

In addition to the standard sensors, Wagner Solartechnik uses some customized sensors. Thanks to the extensively documented PRTG API and the PRTG Custom Sensor, individually written scripts can be used to create the right sensor for any scenario - even unusual ones.

The IT team at Wagner Solartechnik programmed a sensor, which shows the utilization of Citrix licenses. There were a handful of special sensors they got from the published scripts in the PRTG community in Google Code, like for the version check: "Monitoring network locations for the recordings of the Mobotix cameras is very helpful for us. If a camera fails and nothing is stored for a longer period of time, we are informed immediately by email and alerted by PRTG," says Detlef Schwenke with satisfaction.

Identify optimization potential and increase service with PRTG

By consistently monitoring all lines with regard to their utilization, the IT department was able to operate reliable bandwidth planning and traffic optimization based on the evaluations. Also for the server switches monitored with sflow, some optimization measures could be derived from observations in the historical data of PRTG. In addition, the monitoring of RAM and hard disk usage on the servers enables future-proof optimization of the hardware.

For the IT department, this means problems are often identified before they arise. Be it insufficient disk space, missing licenses or usage of terminal servers. As a result, the team is more proactive, ensuring a more reliable and high-performance infrastructure for the entire company.

We have been able to improve our service to the users. Users often report their problems with a delay, so the historical values in PRTG are very useful in helping us to understand what was going on at that particular time and pinpoint why problems occurred.

Wagner Solartechnik even monitors the heating of a remote location with PRTG, which is displayed on a special website for mobile devices. The person responsible can use his Blackberry to see whether the heating is running reliably and can react accordingly, preventing his colleagues from freezing.

Summary

"PRTG runs in the browser and is extremely fast! I can connect to PRTG Network Monitor from any computer in our intranet at any time and check the entire network in a central management interface. Even when I'm on the road, I can dial in via VPN and take a quick look at the status. This not only lowers my stress level, but also often prevents the occurrence of serious problems through early detection," Detlef Schwenke sums up.

About Wagner & Co Solartechnik

Today, Wagner & Co Solartechnik GmbH is one of the leading solar technology companies in Germany and Europe and has been the pioneer of this modern environmental technology for 30 years. The company from Cölbe near Marburg in Hesse is well equipped for the challenges of the future as a sustainable business: state-of-the-art production and technology, a powerful development department, a comprehensive product portfolio and a network of committed sales partners, spread across locations in 6 countries.

WE ARE PAESSLER

In 1997 Paessler revolutionized IT monitoring with the introduction of PRTG Network Monitor. Today over 200,000 IT administrators, in more than 170 countries, rely on PRTG to monitor their business-critical systems, devices and network infrastructures. PRTG monitors the entire IT infrastructure 24/7 and helps IT professionals to seamlessly solve problems before they impact users. Our mission is to empower technical teams to manage their infrastructure, ensuring maximum productivity. We build lasting partnerships and integrative, holistic solutions to achieve this. Thinking beyond IT networks, Paessler is actively developing solutions to support digital transformation strategies and the Internet of Things.