Case Study

RENA Technologies
Unified Endpoint Management

RENA Technologies

Black Forest-based mechanical engineering enterprise RENA Technologies ('The Wet Processing Company') has installed a new software delivery and administration system in record time. Following intensive research, Head of IT Michael Schonhardt decided to make the switch away from FrontRange DSM. Empirum, the classic solution for SMEs, won out against license-free Microsoft solution SCCM.

RENA Technologies selected its Unified Endpoint Management solution for the long term

For the Head of IT at RENA Technologies GmbH, the machinery and systems engineering company based in Gütenbach, 2017 began with a difficult decision. The IT team needed to be provided with cutting-edge basic tools, and one of those tools needed to be an endpoint management system.

For RENA, software and OS delivery to user systems is extremely important. Of the approximately 600 clients in seven international subsidiaries – five in Germany, one in Poland, one in Shanghai – around 30 percent are construction clients. "Everyone needs to be using exactly the same software for things to work at all," explains Schonhardt. "Because of that, the delivery tool is critical to the work we do as a company." Up until now RENA was using a tool that has been known by a number of different names in the past. Most IT specialists refer to it as Enteo NetInstall or FrontRange DSM. The reason for the switch was cited as the fact that, due to the company restructuring (from Rena GmbH to RENA Technologies), most software contracts, including the agreement with Enteo/FrontRange, became obsolete. Extending the existing maintenance contract would have been the same as drawing up a new contract. Therefore it was a good opportunity to put the current system to the test.

Generating profit by focusing on essentials

From the conference rooms of RENA Technologies GmbH in Gütenbach, Germany, the panorama stretches far above the High Black Forest all the way to the Feldberg mountain. With a view like this, it is no wonder that the decision-makers from the wet processing company are not drawn to short-sighted decisions.

The company is now 700 employees strong and boasts five German locations as well as one each in Poland and Shanghai. RENA Technologies focuses on production equipment for renewable energies, medical technologies, and microelectronics.

The old tool was past its prime

The experts responsible for implementing it at the time were no longer at the company, and the tool enjoyed little acceptance among the remaining team members.

So it was high time to "saddle up a new horse," as Schonhardt put it. As Microsoft Enterprise Agreement partners, RENA was soon confronted with a tempting option. After all, the use of the Systems Client Configuration Manager (SCCM) is often included in service agreements. That applied to RENA as well.

It would have been unforgivable to completely ignore a solution that is available for free. "Dispensing with licensing costs certainly has its charms," adds Schonhardt. When deliberating on an alternative to the Microsoft solution, Schonhardt remembered the first time he looked for a client management tool ten years ago. Back then he had considered another solution, one for which he had even conducted a proof of concept. It was the Empirum tool from Matrix42.

Schonhardt crossed paths with SME classic solution Matrix42 once again toward the end of a frustrating day at CeBIT as he decided to take another last-minute stroll through the IT service management area.

The Head of IT and his Client Management representative, Matthias Fritsch, had actually decided to take an early train back home the next morning, but suddenly the pair found themselves standing in front of the exhibit area of Consulting4IT, the Matrix42 partner headquartered in Waldbronn, near Karlsruhe, Germany.

That is when the Head of IT decided to take a closer look at both solutions. He proceeded systematically. Instead of relying on the providers' presentations, he requested reference contacts.
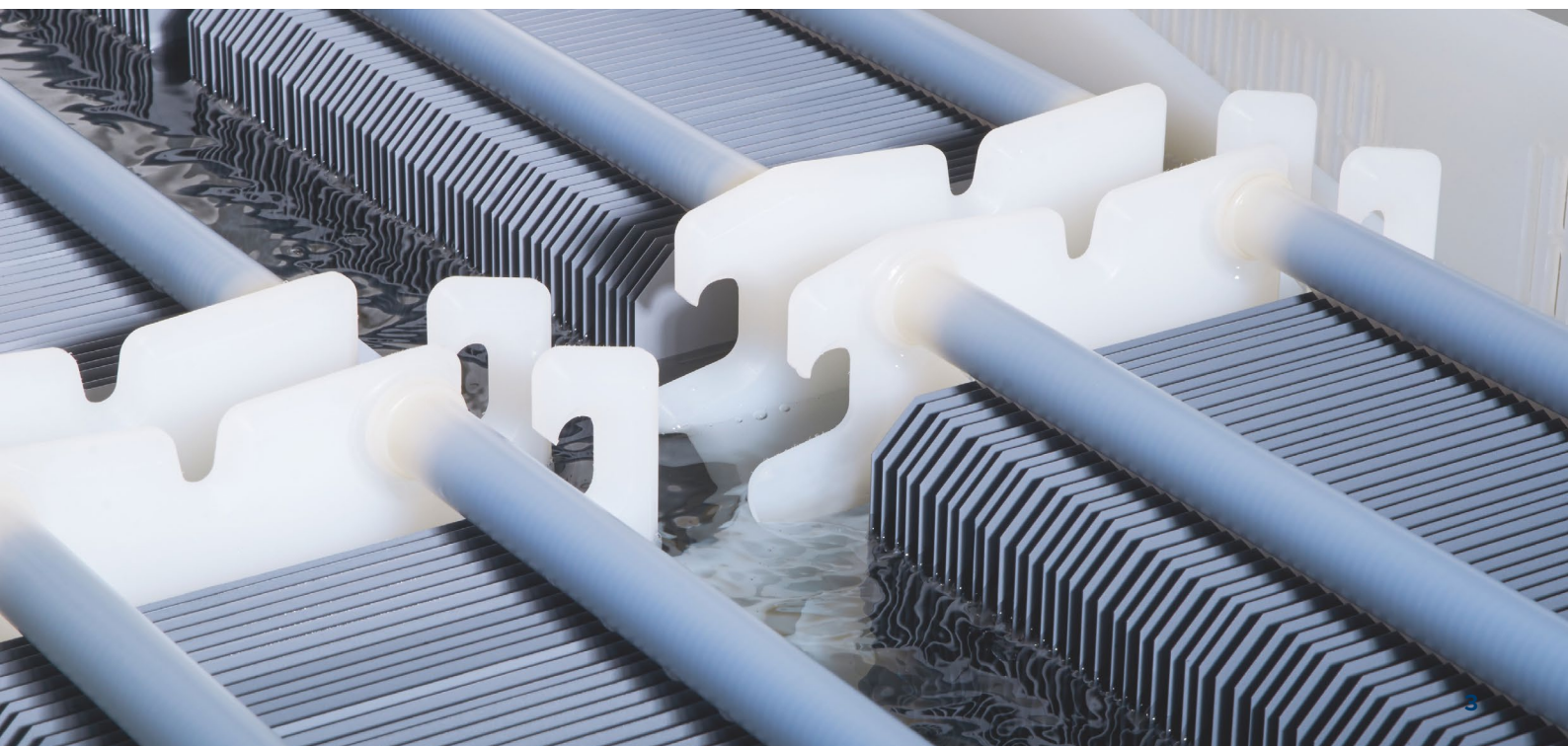
Modularity as a competitive advantage

The discussions with IT experts from different companies were inspiring. "Due to its high scalability, SCCM presents an interesting alternative to companies managing tens of thousands of clients. But it was ease of handling that really turned us on to Empirum," explains the Head of IT.

The Unified Endpoint Management bundle from Matrix42 comprises the Empirum Client Management Tool for software administration and delivery and the integrated OS Installer interface as well as the Silverback tool for management of mobile devices, which RENA uses for its iOS devices.

The package also comes complete with interfaces to the Matrix42 service management functions, particularly the Service Desk, but also the service catalog as well as license, asset, and contract management.

For Schonhardt, the 'module system' is a great advantage of the Matrix42 software. "This way we don't need any third-party tools or related interfaces," he adds. The individual components can be implemented step by step, enabling full technical integration within a standard solution.

RENA will most likely take advantage of the relicensing option for the Service Desk arranged with Consulting4IT. There are few experts left at the company able manage the current OTRS (Open Technology Real Services), and adapting the freeware solution requires in-depth knowledge of development. The other two modules are also on Schonhardt's wish list.

Implementation was carried out at a breakneck speed

The Head of IT certainly had clear ideas about the company's IT requirements. "This time we knew from the very beginning what was important to us," he says. The fact that his colleague Fritsch had experience in SSCM from his previous job clearly demonstrated that the decision was independent and influenced only by the company's requirements. Nevertheless, Fritsch was fully open to exploring the Matrix42 solution. Schonhardt is impressed by his colleague's commitment and expertise. As he likes to add, the success was not only a function of the tool and the employees – it also hinged on the implementation project.

The Head of IT contracted Consulting4IT to provide training and project assistance. Fritsch and two other employees from the Service Desk took part in Empirum training sessions held by the consultant at its training center at the company headquarters in Waldbronn, Germany. "The training staff are highly competent and the Consulting4IT Academy has extensive service offerings. With a VIP shuttle for the hotel, train station, and airport with an extra Academy Bus for the purpose, first-class catering, and evening entertainment, the service speaks for itself," remembers Fritsch

"After training was complete, RENA staff progressed at a remarkable tempo," confirmed Patrick Hold, Head of Sales at Consulting4IT.

The implementation went quickly as well. It took five days – four for Empirum and one for Silverback. During this week, RENA needed exactly one external employee. The employees trained in Waldbronn were able to handle all of the standard tasks themselves. "We created a detailed plan of action: The hardware profiles were extracted from the existing computers, then the operating system templates were created, the applications were packaged, and finally, the Matrix42 tool, including the SQL database, was installed by two employees," relates Schonhardt. However, what sounds simple in retrospect was actually challenging and intense work.

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A new version of the CAD software drove the project

The speed of the project was not entirely voluntary. RENA had two major projects in the pipeline: the switch to Windows 10 and, most importantly, the update of CAD software SolidWorks 2017. The company planned to implement the latter update in September 2017, regardless of the circumstances, with the help of automatic software delivery.

This initial plan was not only carried out as planned – it was implemented well ahead of schedule. Following the site visits in April and May, training began in June, and the software was implemented by the end of August.

Both Schonhardt and Fritsch were impressed by the results. "We were able to install our CAD machines, including all Windows updates, within three hours – all at the touch of a button and without any errors that we would have been forced to correct in retrospect." This process would have taken three days in the past. User acceptance "rocketed to one hundred percent," reports Schonhardt.

Fritsch is able to manage the administration on his own and two colleagues help him with the day-to-day work. The team did not require any outside help following the installation.

"If we need any on-site support again in the future, we will purchase a service package with a fixed number of days." It seems highly unlikely that the team will require more than ten days of service per year.

The Head of IT has just one more request

Schonhardt was suitably euphoric about the project: "The implementation of Matrix42 together with Consulting4IT was incredible right from the very beginning – it was a complete success for the company and I never regretted my decision." Schonhardt was particularly impressed with the transparency of the process. From the beginning straight through to the end, he knew exactly how the team and the plan were progressing. "To sum it up, I felt like I was in very good hands." Currently the IT team is consolidating all of the company's software, and there is one crucial factor for Schonhardt: "I am specifically looking for solutions offered by a specialist." Consulting4IT, as one such specialist, is fully in line with this goal.

When asked if there is anything else he could want, the experienced Head of IT responds with a smile, saying, "If there is anything I could wish for just now, it would be that the Service Desk implementation proceed just as smoothly as the implementation of Empirum. If that happens, then I'll be happy – at least for a while, anyway."

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> Michael Schonhardt,
> Head of IT, RENA Technologies

MATRIX42

Simplify and Secure Digital Work

About Matrix42

Matrix42 helps organizations digitize and secure the workspace environment of their employees. The software for digital workspace experience manages devices, applications, processes and services simple, secure and compliant. The innovative software supports the integration of physical, virtual, mobile and cloud-based workspace environments seamlessly into existing infrastructures.

CONSULTING4IT

Consulting4IT has been working with Matrix42 solutions for over 10 years. As Platinum and Best Performing Partner we support you in projects around the products Service Desk, Service Catalog, Compliance (License, Asset and Contract Management), Empirum as Software Distribution or Silverback as Mobile Device Management Solution. With our specially developed training courses for all Matrix42 modules, we not only train you for the introduction of this tool, but also support you during operation.

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