

Brenntag

Brenntag
Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany

Packeteer® Improves Remote User Collaboration and Eliminate WAN Latency Problems for One of the World's Largest Chemical Distributors

With 8,000 employees and annual revenue of €4.6 billion, German-based Brenntag is one of the world's largest chemical distributors. Brenntag is also recognized as one of the most progressive companies in its industry. A forward-thinking approach is part of Brenntag's culture and they consider it an essential part of their competitive advantage. So when the company set out to create a new shared storage and networking infrastructure across the remote offices in Nordic country operations, they would not give up until they had found the best solution for IT resource optimization and real-time WAN user file access.

THE CHALLENGE: Eliminate the delays Nordic country operations were experiencing in accessing data center storage and solve major problems in productivity

"Brenntag had been working with IBM for many years on a variety of IT projects including maximizing our Linux open source infrastructure and the introduction of IP telephony throughout the organization," said Michael S. Langborg, financial director, Brenntag Nordic. "So, when it came time to choose a solution for our wide area remote office network in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, we naturally looked to IBM and its partners for a cost effective approach that would meet the needs of our users and IT managers." Brenntag knew that IBM would only offer solutions that were as progressive as the company they serve.

For Brenntag's Nordic division, the process of establishing a network for file sharing, e-mail, Internet access, printing and other shared functions began when the division was acquired from another company. Brenntag examined several IT infrastructure alternatives, and concluded that major savings in administration and backup costs could be achieved by designing a consolidated infrastructure with 2 Mbps network connections and IBM file servers located at a central data-center. Brenntag believed that the network infrastructure it built would easily support the large Microsoft Office files that its users would need to quickly access and share from their datacenter. With an average of 30 ms of latency across this network, however, a major problem immediately began to surface.

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— Michael S. Langborg,
financial director



Those same files, which ranged in size from a few hundred kilobytes to five or ten megabytes, and which users had easily shared over the company's local area networks, were now taking enormous amounts of time to serve over the company's Nordic country WAN. Employee productivity slowed to a crawl. In many cases, the time it took to download and/or save a file climbed from seconds to minutes.

"We tried to solve the problem by adding more bandwidth to our Nordic country WAN connections," said Langborg. "But increasing the bandwidth only increased the amount of traffic that could be sent over the connection, it did not increase the speed of file access. We found out that the problem was not so much bandwidth as it was the latency incurred by data traveling across the network between remote offices and the corporate datacenter. WAN latency was the culprit, but luckily for us, IBM knew of an answer."

THE SOLUTION: Packeteer iShared™ WAFS solutions eliminate WAN file access delays and enable real-time file collaboration for remote office locations

As soon as IBM heard of Brenntag's dilemma, they knew that Packeteer's iShared Wide Area File Services (WAFS) solution was the key to eliminating Brenntag's latency issues. Packeteer WAFS products are specifically engineered to eliminate delays caused by latency. In over 7,000 companies around the world, Packeteer's solutions offer LAN speeds at WAN distances.

Of course, Brenntag was skeptical at first. Brenntag had already tried several different ways to solve the problem, all to no avail. With everything to gain, however (and not much to lose), Brenntag agreed to a demonstration of Packeteer's solution.

"What we saw truly surprised us," said Michael Langborg. "The demonstration proved that Packeteer's WAFS solutions would not only solve our WAN latency issues, but would also offer data protection and significant cost savings." Brenntag ordered Packeteer iShared products on the spot, and the company — and its users — had the solution they'd been waiting for.

THE RESULTS: Fast access to data center files and a rapid return on investment

Packeteer's solution consisted of two small, easy-to-connect iShared appliances that fit squarely into Brenntag's existing IT infrastructure — without any changes to that infrastructure. With a single iShared appliance at the company's data cen-

Executive Overview

BUSINESS PROFILE:

- Based in Germany, Brenntag is one of the world's biggest chemical distributors, employing over 8,000 employees with an annual revenue of €4.6 billion

INDUSTRY:

- Manufacturing

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

- Eliminate delays in accessing data center files
- Increase productivity
- Make day-to-day operations more efficient

SOLUTION:

- Packeteer iShared appliances

BENEFITS:

- Fast access to data center files
- Rapid ROI in savings

ter and one appliance at each of its Nordic country remote offices, Brenntag now had a virtual storage solution that traversed the WAN. Brenntag's Nordic country remote office users were now accessing files at speeds that increased their productivity many times over.

"In one initial measurement of Packeteer's solution, Brenntag user response times for 'cold' file access of the same file were slashed from 27 seconds down to three seconds," said Langborg. "And when it came to accessing these same documents 'warm' from the remote office appliance cache, file access times were so rapid that users were unable to measure any delays at all."

Packeteer has given Brenntag a WAN-wide virtual storage solution that offers LAN-like file access. Brenntag's users are able to retain their familiar IT environment without file access delays due to network latency, and Brenntag has achieved the true server and storage consolidation it had hoped for from the start. The company has also realized truly remarkable cost savings.

"We bought the appliances for 11 regional offices plus two for our data center and we are saving about twice that initial investment per year in storage, systems admin and staff costs," said Langborg. "Has our investment in Packeteer iShared WAFS appliances paid for itself in the first year? Absolutely. We also have no question whether we are backing up all our data or whether its integrity is good. That is possibly the biggest benefit of all." Brenntag has discovered the formula for IT consolidation and cost savings, real-time long distance file collaboration and unprecedented WAN data protection. For Brenntag, IBM and Packeteer, this was a formula for success.

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— Michael S. Langborg

Quick Facts

COMPANY PROFILE:

- Brenntag

HEADQUARTERS:

- Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany

EMPLOYEES:

- 8,000