

BNP PARIBAS POLSKA

BNP Paribas Bank's interest in IGEL Technology thin clients and VDI pays dividends.



When BNP Paribas Bank in Poland needed to quickly integrate two banks and their systems, the company turned to IGEL thin clients and a Citrix virtual desktop infrastructure for its 220 branch offices.

BNP Paribas Bank Polska SA is a member of BNP Paribas Group, a leading financial institution with a presence in 75 countries with nearly 185,000 employees, including more than 140,000 in Europe.

Listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange, BNP Paribas Bank Polska has over 2,700 employees with 1,300 staff working in 220 branch offices across the country. The bank offers its individual customers savings and investment products and a wide range of loans, while businesses (micro enterprises, SME and corporations) are provided solutions for financing operations on the Polish and international market. Private Banking customers are extended a comprehensive offering related to assets protection, optimization and growth, as well as investment advisory services.



SUMMARY

The Customer

- BNP Paribas Bank Polska
- 220 branches across Poland
- 1,300 branch staff

The Challenge

- Quickly integrate two banking systems
- Save management time & costs
- Improve user experience

The Solution

- IGEL UD2, UD3, UD9 LX & WES thin clients
- IGEL Universal Management Suite software
- Virtual Desktops with Citrix XenDesktop 7.1

Key Benefits

- Challenging integration delivered in just 6 months
- Reduced TCO and IT support
- Improved user flexibility and experience
- Follow the worker capability

Bank integration challenge

Faced with the challenge of quickly integrating two banks – Dominet Bank and Fortis Bank – and their two very different systems with separate IT infrastructures and applications, the IT team of BNP Paribas Polska had a major project on its hands.

Project “Central System IT” needed to unify the systems and the desktops in the two banks in just 6 months to ultimately create a single banking operation with 220 branches across Poland.

“We had two models of branches, significantly different from each other; in Dominet Bank’s branches the IGEL thin clients were used to connect to a remote desktop and in Fortis Bank branches we used computers with applications installed locally,” explained Bartosz Kołodziej of BNP Paribas Polska’s Technical Management Team.

“As time to prepare for the integration, testing and implementation was very short, we started to think about a solution which would give us the most flexibility and that was easy to deploy.”

The use of thin clients with a virtual desktop infrastructure was suggested by the bank’s system integration partner, Asseco Business Solutions, which also assisted with the migration and implementation of the new infrastructure. The bank tested a range of different thin client alternatives at the time but it was the IGEL thin clients that best met the bank’s expectations. Bartosz added that the bank still monitors the market and tests different thin clients from time-to-time but “IGEL is ahead of the competition in terms of functionality and cost-effectiveness.”

Flexible, stable and fast

The bank was looking for a flexible solution from its thin client deployment that was stable and fast. The installation of the devices had to be as automated as possible with a good management console with features and functionality and all at a good value price. The main advantages of using the IGEL thin clients was deemed to be the ease of use in configuring the thin clients, their fast installation times and ease of maintenance. Lower energy consumption was also an important consideration. “This all translated into lower maintenance costs of the IT infrastructure and higher availability,” said Piotr Chrapała, Head of the User Support Services Department.

These advantages are delivered by the IGEL Universal Management Suite software (UMS), which comes free

with every device. The UMS can be used to set-up, maintain and upgrade all IGEL thin clients from a central location using a policy-based graphical interface. It is a simple to use management tool, which can have thin clients up and running in minutes. Intuitive to use, secure and scalable up to 100,000 thin clients, the IGEL UMS drastically reduces management time for IT administrators.

Using Citrix XenDesktop 7.1 to connect the desktops to the remote virtual desktop using HDX protocol, the technical team first deployed a mixture of IGEL thin clients and PCs. “However, after a very short time we realized that the thin clients have a significant advantage over the PCs. So, in the next phase we replaced all PC with the IGEL thin clients.

Today, the bank has 1,500 IGEL thin clients across its 220 branches connected to virtual machines. The range of IGEL thin clients deployed include UD2, UD3 and UD9 devices with Windows Embedded Standard and Linux firmware. The users can access both web-based and standard applications installed on the virtual desktop, including Microsoft Office and specialist banking applications such as the Cashier Banking System via IBM’s iSeries Access for Windows.

“The implementation of server-based computing went ahead without any problems and did not require any changes of applications,” said Bartosz. “Of course, we had to make a few amendments to allow applications to run in a virtual environment but they were simple tasks such as configuring profiles, mapping printers and file shares.”

Benefits are numerous

The bank reports a wide range of benefits from the move to a virtual and centralized IT system. Easier data backup and updates to desktop clients including security patches, reduced failure rates and system crashes and improved recovery times and overall improvement in branch IT system utilization.

With the IGEL devices, the technical management team has been impressed with the clear and easy to use management console, the ability to fully automate the installation of a new thin client based on the device’s IP address and the ability to buddy update. Buddy update solves the problem where devices in the company regularly need to be updated. If every device accesses the main update server individually, maybe across a great

geographical distance, the updates can take a long time and can overload the entire connection. Using the buddy update feature, only one client will access the main server to download the updates. All other clients at that location can then access the device acting as the local buddy update server from within the local network saving time and network stress.

Bartosz said that the feedback from both the users and the technical administrators had been very good. “The employees are pleased with the fact that they have the flexibility to easily change desks and that their desktop, documents, applications and local printers will follow the worker. The people working in the branches are “universal” bankers, which means that during the day they can often change desks to deal with various challenges and meet customer requests. There are also some situations where an employee from one branch has to move to another for a day or more. This all is very simple to achieve with IGEL and Citrix technology. The office worker can simply move to another desk or branch, log on to any desktop and find everything working as normal, wherever they are based.”

“From the administrator side it is also very good solution. Since the thin clients have replaced the PC, administrators have been able to forget about nights spent on the regular installation of security patches, system restarts after crashes or reinstalling systems due to hardware failure.”

“In the rare event that an IGEL thin client fails, it is very easy for the user to simply move to another desktop and pick up where they left off. This is very important for customer-facing staff. In the meantime, the IT staff can easily prepare a new unit, send it to the office and the local staff just have to plug it in. The new thin client then configures itself automatically in just a few minutes,” said Piotr.

Overall, the bank reports that the biggest savings from the IGEL and virtual desktop deployment have been in the total cost of ownership costs and savings in much reduced IT support requirements.

Moving forward

Today the technical management team is facing a new integration challenge bringing BNP Paribas Bank and BGZ Bank together in Poland. “It is clear that in this case the IGEL and Citrix technology will also be helpful,” said Bartosz. “We will see what tomorrow brings.”

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