



## phion safeguards communications at the specialist mail-order company Erwin Müller

The family-owned company Erwin Müller has been providing reliable top quality textile products in the wholesale trade for over half a century. The company has complemented its range with various specific areas over the decades: In addition to "Baby Butt" various textile markets are now catered for via "Buttinette", "Woll Butt", "Kinderbutt" and "Wohlfühlen & Genießen", so that the medium-sized company can look back on a successful company history with a total of 500 employees and annual revenues totalling some 90 million euros in 2007. A major prerequisite here for succeeding as a comparably small company in a very competitive market environment has always been the use of the latest technologies.

### A network reaches its limitations

As a mail-order house the company operates via the classic sales and communications channels. Webshops are beginning to play an increasingly important role alongside the catalogue, the telephone (via an in-house call centre) and advertising in print media. However, the IT infrastructure reached its limitations when data traffic volumes began to increase: The existing ISDN lines could no longer cope with the increasing flood of data. But the attempt to solve the problem by converting the bursting network to small leased lines did not bring the hoped-for results. It soon became apparent that new lines were needed. However, this was just not possible with the existing IT infrastructure. Faced with this situation, the company began to realise that it needed an entirely new IT environment concept - one for which the security also had to be re-planned, too.

### Core requirements: Security, availability, management - but how?

The communication security requirements were high: Subsidiaries, branch offices, mobile users and of course, the webshops too, all had to be integrated securely into the company network ensuring that spams, viruses, robot networks and other undesirable intruders were kept outside from the outset.

And - the permanent availability of all applications and connections had to be guaranteed too - in brief: A firewall system was required that could on the one hand guarantee protection of the company communications and on the other, not breakdown when coping with high capacities.

As a medium-sized company Erwin Müller GmbH also attaches considerable importance to being able to manage the entire company network with a small yet powerful IT department. A total of ten employees are currently responsible for the company's IT, two of whom must ensure that the company network operates smoothly. Efficient management and economy were therefore the absolute fundamental requirements for the new solution.

### Sought and found

In this phase, from April to May 2004, Jürgen Mayershofer, the company's network manager began to evaluate different security and firewall suppliers. Important criteria for the decision here were the support offered, a coherent price/performance ratio as well as the supplier's competence.

Mayershofer was supported during this phase by Sahl AG, one of the leading IT service suppliers in the Augsburg and Munich region.

### Company Facts

- **Sector**  
Mail-order business
- **Annual revenues 2007**  
€ 90 million
- **Employees**  
Approximately 500
- **Company headquarters**  
Buttenwiesen, Germany
- **Other locations**  
Subsidiaries and branch offices in Germany, Austria and Switzerland
- **Planning**  
Expansion into other central European countries

Source: Erwin Müller Versandhaus GmbH / January 2008





## Satisfaction along the entire line

The company has never regretted its decision to go with phion: More than three years down the road there have never been any serious problems. Many functions in the phion netfence solutions which were not part of the original specifications but were included in the standard package anyway, in contrast to competitive products, have in the meantime turned out to be really useful. And the desire for more efficiency has been surpassed. The entire company network can be managed easily today by just two members of staff thanks to the netfence Management Centre and the skills acquired at the training courses. While the implementation of the netfence solutions at Erwin Müller GmbH was initially perceived as a niche-solution to protect communications, it is perceived today as a strategic instrument by the company. "If we have to set up a new office or a home office at short notice or if a partner is involved in the catalogue production and requires live access to our systems, then the phion technology helps us to organise this quickly and easily."

The two companies have worked together on various projects for over 17 years. "The staff at Sahl know how we and the company work and as such, were able to give us optimum advice," recalls Mayershofer. Even after approaching various suppliers - including established market leaders - and comparing their solutions with the requirements set by Erwin Müller GmbH, the company was still not completely satisfied with the results. Jürgen Mayershofer's team then first heard of phion through the media. An article highlighted both the company and its solutions. The spontaneous reaction at the time was: "Firewalls from Austria - that's just what we need", recalls Mayershofer. However, he was soon to find out just how right he was when a phion employee from Innsbruck showed him phion netfence for the first time. He was immediately impressed by the simplicity of the phion concept: "Management, firewall functions, operation - the first time I saw phion I already had a "that's what I want" feeling," says Mayershofer.

Mayershofer attended a five-day phion Security Engineer (PHSE) training course in July 2004 at the Innsbruck Training Centre together with a member of the Sahl staff, for whom this was also the first project with phion. The future network design began to take shape during this training course. Mayershofer's initial impressions were confirmed here too: "The phion trainers and consultants proved to be extremely competent and cleared up a lot of our questions in this run-up phase." Mayershofer summarises the decision in phion's favour as follows: "We looked at various suppliers and the bottom line is that phion's package is the most convincing: A flexible firewall solution, an excellent Management Centre, very good training courses and all this for a reasonable price/performance ratio."

### Smooth roll-out

The installation was completed in August 2004. The migration from the old to the new system was also completed without any hitches in the scheduled period. The products installed at the company headquarters in Buttenwiesen include a netfence Management Centre on standard hardware as well as the core gateway. Eight branch offices were linked with phion netfence gateways. These include the discrete warehouse and logistics divisions, a lettershop as well as various special dispatch departments. And everything worked fine: The telecommunications lines were there, the in-house structure - everything was ready to go so all that remained was to re-switch the lines from old to new - and it worked. There were no unscheduled downtimes. Mayershofer is pleased: "Everything ran as one would wish for with a migration from old to new: And, when it's all said and done, we are better off now today too!"



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Jürgen Mayershofer

Erwin Müller Versandhaus GmbH

Mayershofer is more than satisfied. In addition to the products, he is also really pleased about the non-bureaucratic work approach and communications with phion. We speak the same language, react within a time zone and are really close to the manufacturer in geographical terms. The fast implementation of feature request suggestions should not be underestimated either. He is convinced: "The people working at phion understand their work and know how to convey their expertise." This is by no means a matter of course everywhere. The long partnership with Sahl AG has also proven to be a further success factor, too. Mayershofer is also impressed by the ongoing technological developments at phion. "New features are introduced regularly, things are happening here. Whenever our previous supplier brought out an update for the Management Console, this resulted in a week's work for us. There are things in the phion solutions that really make our lives easier and that work straight away. The peer-to-peer detection, for example: This feature was announced in May 2007 and integrated shortly afterwards with a minimum of effort. This forges confidence in the manufacturer. I am convinced that we will have this solution in use in our company for a very long time to come."

### Sahl Computer AG - Mehr als IT-Business

Sahl Computer AG is one of the leading IT service suppliers in the Augsburg and Munich region. The team currently comprises some 100 staff and cares for companies of different sizes and from different industries in all segments professionally throughout Germany with standardised IT solutions. The main focus for Sahl AG is upon consultation, sales and the support of professional IT solutions for mid-sized business customers.