



As far as the security of data processing systems is concerned, the banking and financing sector marks the upper end of the requirement range. As a result, outsourcing service providers for the banking industry like the IZB Informatik-Zentrum Muenchen-Frankfurt am Main GmbH & Co. KG must be able to guarantee the security and availability of the services provided according to rules - and, at the same time, ensure and optimize profitability. Customers of the IZB, a member of the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe, include the BayernLB, Deka Bank, LBS Bayern, Deutsche Kreditbank AG and the Sparkassenverband Bayern. Since 1994, the outsourcing specialist has provided a professional services portfolio ranging from the operation of high-performance computer centres and the management of decentralized client-server systems, mail and database hosting to IP based voice communications.

Over the years, the IZB Informatik-Zentrum has built a highly complex firewall infrastructure to ensure the security of outgoing and incoming data traffic. More than one hundred gateways from well-known manufacturers were used in computer centres in Munich, Nuremberg and Offenbach, as well as in additional server backbone locations and customer sites around the world.

However, this infrastructure had reached its limits: Massive maintenance costs and the underlying system architecture have made troubleshooting virtually impossible. In addition, the associated management tool was not multi-client compatible - the provider offered this feature, but only via a cost-intensive add-on product.

This situation had become unacceptable for economic considerations. Consequently, the team around Matthias Tauber, Department Manager Network Security at the IZB Informatik-Zentrum began to look for alternatives - and came across phion at the beginning of 2004.

phion beats competition

phion netfence gateways are recognized by the market for their suitability primarily in highly critical environments. After all, the Innsbruck-based security specialist successfully implemented the world's largest centrally administered firewall cluster consisting of 650 systems for an Austrian IT service provider in the banking sector.

But still, this argument did not fully convince Matthias Tauber: "I have to admit that I was very sceptical. We had already deployed three large firewall products so that an additional solution did not seem to be necessary. Moreover, internationally renowned manufacturers were not able to offer the required management and trouble shooting functionality - so why should phion be able to?"

During the subsequent evaluation phase, phion solutions had to prove themselves from scratch. As an ISO certified company, the IZB Informatik-Zentrum performs strictly defined processes in the context of "technical quality assurance before production" which all new products have to pass.

In addition, very high technology standards defined by the Sparkassen Informatik-Zentrum (SIZ) for all savings banks had to be considered.

Company Facts

- **Industry**
Financial service provider
- **Turnover**
183,5 Million €
- **Employees**
681
- **Certificates**
ISO 9001:2000,
ISO 27001:2005,
Best CPI and Trusted
Site Infrastructure (TSI)
by TÜViT, Bank standard
„Sicherer IT-Betrieb“
by Sparkassen Infor-
matik Zentrum (SIZ)

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The team of the IZB Informatik-Zentrum evaluated phion netfence and two other identically configured firewalls within a test network for four months. Two Smartbit generators produced data traffic of up to two gigabits, while 500,000 sessions were generated to test the competing systems for real performance under load.

Apart from the performance analysis, the tests primarily focused on the management and behaviour in various failover scenarios which are extremely important for trouble-free operation.

After completion of the tests, the result obtained was unambiguous: phion netfence proved to be the best solution across all metrics and prevailed against competitors so that even Matthias Tauber was convinced: "What phion promised sounded too good to be true. Today, I am very confident about the performance and management of our netfence gateways. The IZB Informatik-Zentrum will definitely outperform the anticipated reduction in system maintenance of 15 percent - resulting in a decrease of about 1,000 man hours per year."

Smooth and efficient rollout

Following the decision for phion solutions, the rollout of the netfence gateways was initiated and the majority of firewall products used so far was replaced. The objective will now be to successively convert 70 to 80 gateways to phion netfence by the end of 2006. Controlware, a long-time IT service provider based in Dietzenbach, will advise the IZB Informatik-Zentrum on all commercial aspects of the conversion. The technical implementation will be performed by the team of Matthias Tauber.

"As a specialist for complex IT environments and partner of phion, we recognize the economic potential released by the installation of netfence gateways in management intensive environments", explains Michael Dzik, the responsible Account Manager at Controlware. "In cooperation with the IZB Informatik-Zentrum, we have developed and implemented an infrastructure which combines top performance and cost optimization."

Management meets high expectations

The ease of installation and maintenance of one single gateway does not play a role in large infrastructures anymore - as the sheer volume of systems results in an enormous expenditure of time and staff anyway. phion addresses this situation by providing the netfence Communication Protection Architecture: All solutions are managed by dedicated and centralized servers allowing access to the full range of functionalities even at operating system level. With this, even in globally distributed structures only few administrators are required to monitor and configure the gateways, define sets of rules and capture data.

Matthias Tauber explains the effects of this highly centralized management system by a simple arithmetic example: "We have recently performed an update of phion software to version 3.2 for four gateway clusters. Only one employee was required to perform the update, including the management update, and the whole process took only one and a half hours. In contrast, the update process of our previous firewall product would have required painstaking preparations and about two days in time for each cluster."

Top level customer support

phion positions itself as a European company which is set apart from international market players by providing a strong local customer proximity.

Matthias Tauber confirms that especially the support quality benefits from this. "During the test phase, we already noticed that the phion support reacts by far more rapidly than we were used to from other manufacturers. Difficulties that occur in working with complex software are solved by phion within short time - our previous provider sometimes needed months for solving problems."

The right decision

Based on the benefits provided by the phion solutions for management, trouble shooting and support, the IZB Informatik-Zentrum has drawn the logical consequences: Apart from a few exceptions, phion netfence gateways define the security standard in the IZB computer centres, server backbone locations and customer installations. Matthias Tauber asserts that this will continue: "Especially with a view to upcoming business expansions, we are convinced that we have found the right partner in phion. As far as the economic management of larger firewall structures or the reduction of operating costs through more efficient administration and trouble shooting is concerned, I can strongly advise companies to evaluate the phion solutions. From our perspective, there is no better provider in these areas than phion."