

Case Study



Matthias Ratz, Head of Groupware

Summary:

Hansgrohe AG (www.hansgrohe.com) was founded in 1901 and is among the world's leading manufacturers of innovative high-end fixtures for premium and luxury kitchens and bathrooms. The company continuously brings innovative products to the market that exhibit imagination and the highest degree of performance and quality.

Matthias Ratz, Hansgrohe's Head of Groupware is responsible for managing the company's mail

and groupware services for employees as it scales and grows the number of personnel and partners worldwide. Based in Germany, he manages a team of two Domino administrators and one Domino developer who ensure that global employees' communications systems are up and running wherever they are, no matter what time zone they are in.

With the company standardized on Lotus Notes, Hansgrohe originally utilized basic features built into its central system monitoring tool that it implemented for its whole IT infrastructure, in addition to two full-time e-mail administrators who were constantly kept busy monitoring the assortment of Domino, Sametime and Blackberry Enterprise Servers. When he found GSX, Matthias was immediately drawn to its technology that reached beyond the capabilities of Hansgrohe's central monitoring tool to specifically handle the specialized needs of Lotus Domino servers. Matthias quickly realized how much time his administration team could save, and deployed GSX software to automate the upkeep of Hansgrohe's email system and servers.

The IT Architecture:

Hansgrohe AG has been using Lotus Notes since 1996. It started inside the IT department with 20 users and has now expanded Lotus e-mail and other groupware services for more than 2,200 users in 30 countries all over the world. The company employs two e-mail administrators to constantly monitor 29 Domino servers, one Sametime server and one BlackBerry Enterprise Server to ensure that the e-mail infrastructure has nearly perfect uptime and that there are no problems sending emails that secure product orders and generate revenue for the company.

The Challenge:

E-mail continuity has become mission critical for Hansgrohe. The Company is a world leader in the kitchen and bath product and design industry, and a reliable worldwide e-mail system is a necessity because it is a central part of Hansgrohe's revenue-generating process. The company utilizes confirmation e-mails to initiate suppliers to deliver specific parts for production. If these are delayed, production stops because of missing parts.

"Production is a critical step in high-end kitchen and bathroom fixtures, where sales are generated by made-to-order products. If there are any problems or delays, especially when it comes to BES servers and BlackBerry service, high-level executives begin to take notice and start asking what is wrong," said

Matthias Ratz. "Furthermore, the customer experience suffers because Hansgrohe is in a high-touch segment where "fast" is synonymous with "good" for customer service. Also as a global company, e-mail continuity has become a necessity for its internal communication capabilities."



Another major challenge the company faces is its fast growth in emerging markets in different time zones with weak technical infrastructures. Since 2002, the company has hired 660 new employees. Manually maintaining a constantly growing massive global infrastructure with 31 different e-mail servers required several personnel for management and large amounts of resources because of the scale and specialization in monitoring tasks. With two administrators assigned to e-mail monitoring, Hansgrohe needed to maximize its capacity in order to support the company's

employees and maintain its growth.

Effective monitoring solutions have to be very specific to the applications, and Lotus Notes is no exception. With only two administrators, it was nearly impossible to manually check for errors on all server log files and/or mail boxes. Furthermore, monitoring major Domino tasks was not possible solely with administrators.

The Requirements:

Matthias and his team constantly juggled different tools needed for specialized monitoring for specific applications on its IT infrastructure. Amplifying this burden, the IT team needed a solution that handled the specificity of Lotus Notes and Domino while still being flexible and robust enough to monitor its BlackBerry and Sametime servers. Additionally, the solution needed to integrate seamlessly with and cascade into the central system monitoring tool implemented for the whole Hansgrohe IT infrastructure. This tool acts as IT's central nervous system, and although it provided sufficient monitoring tools for Hansgrohe IT's applications, it did not have the capabilities needed to monitor the company's heterogeneous email environment.

Originally, Matthias was not searching for an e-mail monitoring tool. However, he was introduced to GSX and decided to evaluate GSX Monitor when he saw all the advantages it could provide. Matthias especially appreciated how easy it was for Domino administrators to use GSX Monitor, which prompted him to check if other tools in the market were comparable. After an evaluation of alternative solutions, he concluded that none were easy to implement and use as GSX Monitor.

Why GSX:

After seeing GSX Monitor in action for the first time, Hansgrohe's IT staff knew instantly that it could save a considerable amount of time and resources previously devoted to manual administration. GSX Monitor provides a variety of functions and presents a complete overview of all Domino, BlackBerry Enterprise Server and Sametime servers in use at the same time.

GSX Monitor was fully installed and running without any software deployment on any of the e-mail servers around the world. It covers all important administrator jobs and the software license is very affordable, considering the economic climate and buying challenges many companies face.

Now, with Hansgrohe using GSX Monitor V9, the IT team has an instant overview of the company's e-mail infrastructure, including all servers running with different tasks. This powerful knowledge enables administrators to take proactive measures to ensure business continuity. Furthermore, Matthias' two-person e-mail administration team saves over ten man hours every month, enabling them to be productive in other areas in the company such as developing applications or planning new IT infrastructures in Emerging Market countries.

"GSX was easy to install on the administrators' desktop, and took very little time – literally minutes. We needed very little formal training for our administrators to fully maximize GSX Monitor's potential," said

Mathias Ratz. "Once installed, GSX Monitor gave us, in one second, an overview of our infrastructure, including all running servers with their tasks and much more. We can now react more proactively on upcoming issues, while receiving information via SMS or e-mail. It has helped us make our Domino and BES infrastructures even more reliable. In case of e-mail blockages or lost network connections, we can solve the problem quickly to keep the outage time very short, or to avoid the outage altogether."

The GSX Experience:

"We are absolutely satisfied with our deployment of GSX Monitor," says Mathias Ratz. "The software was as easy to install as promised, performs very well and has not required any additional work after installation except for some threshold value changes. GSX has always provided us with fast and efficient technical support and service."

Ultimately, GSX has helped Hansgrohe build a more reliable e-mail infrastructure for all its global employees. For the value it delivers, saving administrator time and helping the company avoid communications disasters, GSX has become a key piece of Hansgrohe's overall IT infrastructure. Leading this initiative, Matthias Ratz has transformed the Groupware Team into a proactive team that helps the business scale and grow.

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About Hansgrohe – the original from the Black Forest

In its 107-year history, Hansgrohe (www.hansgrohe.com), headquartered in Schiltach/Black Forest, has acquired the reputation within the sanitary industry as a leading innovator in technology and design. With its showers, fittings and shower systems, Hansgrohe creates the original products that make the bathroom more functional, more comfortable and more beautiful. In 2007, the Company generated sales of EUR 661 million with its Axor, Hansgrohe, Pharo and Pontos brands (2006: EUR 569 million) – a 16% gain year-on-year. The Company creates new jobs both in Germany and abroad on the back of this performance. The Hansgrohe Group currently has a global workforce of more than 3,200 employees, with two-thirds of them working in Germany. The Company, which takes tough action against product piracy and intellectual property theft, manufactures its products in six German plants, in France, the Netherlands, in the U.S. and in China.

