checkmk

Case Study

Industrial company monitors its IT infrastructure with Checkmk Watchbox

THE CLIENT

Company: Albert Knoblinger Gesellschaft m.b.H. & Co. KG

Size: 100 employees

Location: Ried im Innkreis, Austria

Website: www.knoblinger.com

Albert Knoblinger Gesellschaft m.b.H. & Co. KG has been dealing with mechanical bulk materials handling and other bulk handling technology for decades. As an expert in everything related to the storage, transport and processing of goods such as wood pellets, grain, animal feed, minerals or metals, the family-owned company combines traditional craftsmanship with innovative technology. Knoblinger has been successful in the marketplace for almost 60 years and continues to grow steadily.

KEY POINTS

- As its own IT infrastructure has continued to grow, Knoblinger's IT team had been looking for a monitoring solution that could be easily implemented and managed without too much effort.

- Through its IT service provider Siedl Networks, Knoblinger purchased the 'Checkmk-Watchbox' monitoring appliance in the Spring of 2020. Siedl helped with the implementation, and since then Knoblinger has been running the monitoring on its own.

- Knoblinger currently has around 1,500 services in its monitoring system, but is planning to expand this. For example, the company is currently testing the predictive maintenance of its bulk handling machines with Checkmk.

ESTABLISHED COMPANY IS LOOKING FOR IT MONITORING

Since its foundation by Albert Knoblinger in 1964, Albert Knoblinger GmbH & Co. KG has come a long way and has enjoyed great success. The basis of this success is Knoblinger's ability to adapt consistently to new requirements and, at the same time, to constantly expand its own know-how. The mechanical engineering expert is primarily active in the field of bulk solids technology and is known worldwide for its high product quality. Today, Knoblinger exports more than 80 percent of all the systems it produces abroad.

One example of how Knoblinger has successfully integrated new technologies is in the area of IT monitoring. Since the company has grown steadily in recent years and digitized more and more processes, the IT department was looking for an IT monitoring solution in the Spring of 2020.

Figure 1: Knoblinger has the hightest requirements for the quality of its products

Since the company did not yet have any practical experience in this area, Knoblinger asked the IT consultant Siedl Networks for a monitoring solution. Siedl introduced Knoblinger to its 'Checkmk Watchbox', a fanless, low-energy hardware appliance on which Checkmk runs under Debian 10. Thanks to the rugged design this appliance is suitable for continuous operation in industrial plants (at ambient temperatures from 0 - 40 °C).

Siedl can adjust the computing power, RAM and hard disk space as required of the appliance. Thanks to Checkmk, the monitoring run stably and it is additionally possible to combine several Watchboxes as a distributed monitoring system.

THE CHALLENGE

For Knoblinger, it was important that the monitoring did not impose a high workload on its IT administrators. At the same time, the company wanted a sustainable solution that would enable further deployment options in the future and also be able to respond flexibly to changes in the IT infrastructure.

Knoblinger opted for one Checkmk Watchbox from Siedl in April 2020 that was configured by Siedl according to Knoblinger's wishes. Since Checkmk is easy to operate even without monitoring experience, Knoblinger has taken over the operation of the monitoring completely in-house. Knoblinger obtains the necessary Checkmk licenses from Siedl Networks.

In the first preliminary meeting with Siedl Networks, it pretty quickly became clear that Checkmk was the best fit for our company. That said, our expectations were later once again surpassed.

Andreas Augdopler, IT manager at A. Knoblinger GmbH

Figure 2: As a modern, medium-sized company, Knoblinger focuses on digital innovation

The IT department currently has around 1,500 Checkmk services in its monitoring. Knoblinger monitors typical IT infrastructure assets such as Windows and Linux servers or SQL databases. Web services and the functioning of security mechanisms such as Fail2Ban or Veeam backups are also part of the monitoring. The official Checkmk plug-ins are used for these applications. Knoblinger also relies on the Proxmox virtualization platform and the Ceph storage solution – and the IT team also monitors these with plug-ins it has written itself.

THE SOLUTION

The Checkmk Watchbox from Siedl Networks has provided Knoblinger with an easy entry into IT monitoring. The ease of use and the ability to monitor a large number of different systems with a small appliance convinced the IT team.

FURTHER EXPANSION OF MONITORING IS ONGOING

From Knoblinger's point of view, implementation and operation are running optimally. Following a Checkmk training by Siedl Networks, the IT team is able to operate and expand the monitoring itself. The IT team largely controls the IT monitoring centrally, only in a few special cases local teams get access to the monitoring like for the printers that a also being monitored. Here, the individual departments have access to Checkmk, too.

> *I would like to emphasize in a particularly positive way how much Checkmk achieves with few resources. It has been working stably and without failures since its introduction.*
>
> **Andreas Augdopler**, IT manager at A. Knoblinger GmbH

The monitoring workload is manageable and it is easily handled by the small IT team without additional personnel being required. In particular, the connection of the user administration to the monitoring via LDAP eliminates the need for separate administration of users, groups and passwords.

Figure 3: Checkmk can also monitor industrial plants

THE ADVANTAGES

The Checkmk Watchbox from Siedl Networks provided Knoblinger with an easy entry into IT monitoring. The ease of use and the ability to monitor a wide range of different systems with a small appliance convinced the IT team.

Knoblinger plans to expand its monitoring: Since Checkmk can be easily adapted to new systems and all hosts can be easily managed even in distributed environments, Knoblinger would like to monitor bulk materials systems at its customers' sites. The information received will then help Knoblinger to maintain the systems more effectively.

Figure 4: Knoblinger aims to monitor bulk materials plants

The aim is to provide predictive maintenance to its customers by analyzing trends. Checkmk has all of the required prerequisites for this. In addition to its scalability and adaptability to a wide range of systems, such as bulk solids plants, Checkmk's Managed Services Edition allows for a strict separation of the various customer instances. Knoblinger can centrally manage rights and approvals for different Checkmk users without experiencing data protection problems.

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