SOFTBOX SETS THE STAGE FOR GROWTH AND IT AUTOMATION WITH N-ABLE'S N-CENTRAL 9.0

ABOUT:
MSP and IT solutions provider serving SMB customers in R&D, technical, biotech and electronics markets.

Location: Munich, Germany
Website: www.softbox.de

Challenges:
- Transitioning clients to managed services
- Reducing labor-intensive processes, such as onboarding of new customers, and off-site travel
- Supporting and cultivating first and second-level technicians
- Eliminating downtime for customers
- Seizing the growing MSP market opportunity in Germany

Solution:

N-central®, the IT channel's #1 RMM and MSP service automation platform; Security Manager; Backup Manager; and Report Manager

Benefits:
- Quick, time-saving onboarding of customers and devices
- Easy-to-use Automation Manager tool is poised to help first and second-level technicians work more efficiently
- Excellent remote control functionality allows up to 90% of help desk tasks to be performed remotely
- Full scope of managed services tools to build a professional MSP practice and capitalize on increased demand

In Germany, where the managed service provider (MSP) market is just starting to take off, Oliver Kaspar, co-founder of Munich-based network and IT solutions provider Softbox, is ready to seize the opportunity. Founded in 1997 as an application development company, Softbox evolved to focus on IT in 2004, adding managed services into the mix a few years later.

With more than 150 customers overall, Softbox serves small to midsize business (SMBs) in the Munich area, with its sweet spot being companies with 10-200 employees. And although managed services are experiencing growing demand across Germany, Kaspar says the businesses he works with – mostly research and development, technical, electronics and biotech firms – are hesitant to jump right in.

"While it's technically possible for managed services to support these businesses, there is a fear about information sharing that exists in the German market," says Kaspar. "MSPs also face complex, time-consuming processes for changing existing customer contracts into managed services contracts. It's just the nature of the way business is done in Germany."

Still, Softbox has seen its managed services practice grow to the point that Kaspar decided to make the move to a new, more robust remote monitoring and management (RMM) platform. In mid-2012, after several years working with GFI's RMM solution, he and his team turned to N-able Technologies®, the global leader in RMM software.

"We simply outgrew GFI and needed something more powerful," says Kaspar. More power, performance and business enablement were just three of the benefits that came with N-able's N-central® 9.0, the industry's #1 RMM and MSP service automation platform.

Easy Onboarding, More Automation with N-central

In a few short months since starting with N-able, Softbox already has more than 700 devices under management with N-central, which it uses for both time-based contracts and managed service customers.

Like other N-able MSP partners, Softbox has found that the key to getting customers onboarded quickly is the N-able "probe," which is at the heart of N-central's robust and flexible process for discovering, importing and configuring devices to be managed. MSPs simply deploy the probe software application to a device on the customer network, and they are then able to discover and import all other IP-enabled devices automatically – from Windows and network devices, to printers, servers and workstations. From there, all kinds of opportunities open up for the MSP, including the ability to set up monitoring, management, automation and reporting for all IT assets upon import.

Kaspar and his staff of 11 use N-central extensively for monitoring, and are starting to take advantage of the new Automation Manager feature available in N-central 9.0. "It's astonishingly easy to script tasks – that's a big help for our first and second level support technicians. There are a lot of possibilities ahead using this technology," says Kaspar.

Without any prior scripting knowledge, Automation Manager lets users visually create powerful, multi-step policies by leveraging a vast library of pre-defined automation objects, each responsible for performing a specific task. Automation objects can be linked to run in sequences as defined by control flow and decision points, allowing MSPs to reduce the amount of labor required for routine tasks and accelerate the delivery of quality IT services while also curtailing expenses.

Remote Service Capabilities Save Time and Money

Although Kaspar says Munich is a relatively small city on a global scale, with a population of nearly two million, N-central's cloud-based Remote Control feature has also come in very handy to the Softbox team. Eighty to 90 per cent of the MSP's help desk work is performed remotely.

"It's time consuming to travel to customer locations, so we prefer to go on site only for major new system deployments and when our bigger customers want us to have a presence of several hours a week in their office," says Kaspar. "Having an effective remote control solution is extremely valuable."

Softbox uses its own ticket system, which is integrated with N-central to support help desk services, and the MSP is also making use of N-able's Backup Manager, Report Manager and Security Manager solutions in an effort to build a highly professional managed services practice.

"Our primary goal is to guarantee our customers that their systems will always be usable. We want to maximize uptime by eliminating any downtime," says Kaspar. "With the N-able approach to managed services and its N-central technology, we are able to make that happen – at a price that is very appealing to our customers."

Bright Future Ahead

As Kaspar looks to the future, he'd like to expand his company even further. But for now, he is investing in the tools, technology, technicians and infrastructure to get ready for the big managed services wave that's hitting Germany. With N-able's support, he has put his managed services business on the fast track and is building on his success.

"Business is very good," he says. "Heading into 2013, everybody wants new systems and there is strong demand for managed services in Munich – a lot of growing companies are interested in what we have to offer. We see great growth ahead and a lot more services potential with N-able's N-central platform."

Next Steps

- Read more case studies about N-able's MSP Partners
- Start a free trial of N-able's N-central RMM software
- Contact us to learn more about N-central