

CASE STUDY

Stadt Pforzheim reaps significant benefits from Infinidat's Storage-as-a-Service

With around 130,000 citizens, the modern city of Pforzheim is situated north of the Black Forest in the German federal state Baden-Württemberg. As a major administrative centre, the city plays an important role within the wider area and surrounding county Enzkreis. With its approximately 3,000 employees, the city council offers a large variety of services to its citizens, companies, and organisations in this region and beyond. Much of these services increasingly rely on IT, which is provided centrally by the "Amt für Digitalisierung und Organisation" (ADO) in the city's own data centre. The Information and Communication Technology Department is situated within the ADO. As its leader, Andreas Hurst is responsible for both the strategic direction of this department and its IT operations. Hurst explains the role of storage within IT as follows: "Our citizens, companies, and users of the administration of the city entrust us with their data. Privacy, data protection, and availability are absolutely critical to operating the city."

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Andreas Hurst

Leader of the Information and
Communication Technology Department

THE CHALLENGE: TRANSPARENCY AND FLEXIBILITY OF THE CLOUD IN ON-PREMISES DATA CENTRE

Hurst and his team were looking for a storage solution that could do a better job at fulfilling the requirements of providing modern data protection and availability than their incumbent vendor. In addition, Stadt Pforzheim was seeking two new specific requirements: transparency and flexibility. Hurst's idea: Find a storage solution that combines the transparency and flexibility of the cloud with the control and privacy of your own data centre. "In short, what we were looking for was storage-as-a-service," explained Hurst. "We wanted to keep it as simple and flexible as possible: Pay for the terabyte we were using and nothing else; no added or hidden costs whatsoever. We wanted to be able to scale up as well as scale down capacity, according to demand and have full transparency and predictability of costs."

When the city of Pforzheim started a Europe-wide tender, Hurst and his team could not be sure if any vendor was actually able to comply with their requirements, though they had conducted extensive market research. In the end, Infinidat was able to demonstrate that it met their extensive requirements and came out on top in the selection process. "It was not just the fact that Infinidat was able to offer us exactly what we wanted," commented Hurst. "They also did a very good job when presenting their solution to us. Our team is quite technical and the architecture of the InfiniBox really appealed to us. This is true for the way the redundant architecture with three node guarantees data availability, as well as the three storage tiers, that together with Neural Cache ensures the best performance as well as cost-efficiency."

Solution Advantages for Stadt Pforzheim



Significant cost savings per TB



Flex payment model replacing CAPEX: full transparency and predictability



Cloud-flexibility without cloud-drawbacks



Tight integration with Veeam for full-proof backup

THE SOLUTION: INFINIBOX® AT ITS BEST

After the decision for Infinidat's InfiniBox had been made, everything went very fast. The IT operations of Stadt Pforzheim moved to a new data centre and the Infinidat systems were installed - up and running within 6 weeks in the new data centre as well as the backup location, which operates in active/active mode. "Infinidat was also able to comply with one special requirement we had," said Hurst. "The InfiniBox usually comes fully integrated in its own rack. But we wanted the systems to be integrated into our racks. Infinidat flew in a technician from Israel, who did all the installation and cabling. And he did a perfect job."

The storage capacity is charged according to demand on a monthly basis. "The flexibility to scale down as well as to scale up is very important to us," explained Hurst. "Scaling down, and therefore paying less, actually happens quite often, usually when we finish testing a new solution, a migration project, or deleting snapshots, that we no longer require. The predictability of costs when scaling up is extremely helpful as well. We charge IT costs directly associated with a specific process or project to the department in charge. And with Infinidat I can precisely tell my colleagues what it will cost them in terms of storage when they plan a new project. It's a simple task of multiplying capacity demand by price per TB."

TECHNICAL DETAILS

The InfiniBox system is connected via several iSCSI links to 30 AMD - or Intel - based servers, that form a Hyper-V-cluster based on Windows Server 2022. In addition to common Microsoft applications like Exchange and SQL, Hurst and his team run about 350 communal applications, almost exclusively in virtual machines. For backup they rely on Veeam: "The integration with Veeam works really well," summed up Hurst. "Here as elsewhere my comment as a technician is that all the details are planned and executed impressively well. We did not have any problems with integrating Veeam. This ensures flawless backup processes."

The company is planning to set up a Kubernetes infrastructure in the future. The containerized applications will then also be connected to the InfiniBox storage systems.

"Another technical point that convinced us to go with Infinidat is its support of NVMe over Fabrics (NVMe-oF)," explained Hurst. "It was important to us to keep our options open and remain future-proof. As our storage network supports NVMe-oF, we wanted to be sure our storage systems would also be ready for this next step in storage connectivity if and when we want to take this step."

WHITE GLOVE SERVICE - AN ADDITIONAL TRUMP CARD

Infinidat's unique "white glove service" has also proven its worth to Hurst: "With other vendors, a support request starts with entry-level support and in complicated cases, which are much more frequent than the easy ones, one has to work one's way up to get in touch with a person who is actually able to help. Not so with Infinidat's white glove service."

Solution Advantages for Stadt Pforzheim



Comprehensive support for container environments



Guaranteed 24x7 data availability



High level of acceptance by admin team



Storage team free to pursue more productive projects

Infinidat delivers this comprehensive white glove service at no additional cost. Every customer is directed straight to L3 development support, which is the highest level of customer support in the industry. Even better, a dedicated technical advisor is assigned, who knows the customer installation inside-out to ensure customer success.

Hurst is also full of praise for the Best Practices documents for a wide variety of use cases provided on the Infinidat website. These documents help his team to run workloads at maximum efficiency.

MULTIPLE SALIENT BENEFITS

“Moving from a CAPEX model to a flex model such as we now have, we not only benefit from transparency and flexibility, but also reduced the costs per TB significantly,” said Hurst. In addition to the purely financial benefits, the city of Pforzheim also profits from Infinidat’s ‘set-it-and-forget-it’ approach. Once installed and configured, the InfiniBox hardly needs any manual administration at all. This way it frees up resources within the storage team to attend to more productive tasks - a point which is especially relevant in times of the shortage of qualified labour.

“Something you should not underestimate as well,” added Hurst, “is the high acceptance of the Infinidat solution by the administrators. They like the easy, efficient management and have been convinced of it right from the start.” The same holds true for Hurst’s customers, the heads of departments as well as the citizens and employees of the city: “It is a game-changer to always have enough capacity to run any project that may be necessary and provide it with high performance.”

His experience led Hurst to take a very positive view on the future: “Infinidat has delivered on all its promises and we look forward to continuing and extending the relationship for a long time.”

To learn more about how Infinidat can help your organization scale to win, visit [Infinidat.com](https://www.infinidat.com).