SPAR AUSTRIA - CYGNA AUDITOR PLATFORM

Since its founding, SPAR Austria has relied on the most advanced IT systems available to facilitate the work of its employees and to stay one step ahead of competitors.

The SPAR Austria Group is a Central European retail conglomerate, operating in the business sectors of food (SPAR), sports retail (Hervis), and shopping centers (SES Spar European Shopping Centers). Here's how it all began: In 1954, 100 independent merchants from Tyrol and Salzburger Pinzgau in Austria joined forces to form the SPAR retail chain, and in a further step, the SPAR Austrian Goods Trade AG was founded in Salzburg in 1970 through the merger of 10 SPAR wholesalers. Today, SPAR is the only nationwide food retail company in the country that is still 100% Austrian-owned. In 1991, with the founding of ASPIAG (Austria SPAR International AG), the company expanded into neighboring countries. The headquarters of ASPIAG is located in Widnau (Switzerland). The SPAR Austria Group operates in Northeast Italy, Slovenia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Croatia. Overall, over 70,000 people are employed by the SPAR Group.

In Austria alone, over 38,000 employees work for SPAR - making SPAR the largest private Austrian employer. Depending on the type of store (SPAR, SPAR express, SPAR-Gourmet, EUROSPAR, INTERSPAR, Maximarkt), between 2,000 and 50,000 products are offered. With over 3,000 own-brand products – from SPAR Natur*pur through S-BUDGET and SPAR Veggie to SPAR PREMIUM – SPAR counts among the innovation leaders in Austria. This also includes the ongoing standardization of processes and systems in the IT area.

Structure and Organization:

In line with the dynamic development of the SPAR Austria Group, the tasks of IT have also evolved. The first IT solutions were established back in the 1970s, reflecting the core processes of the food retail industry (purchasing, sales, warehousing) as well as the accompanying finance and human resources. Rapid development began with mainframes and was later replaced by client/server technologies. A milestone was the in-house development of a WWS (Warehouse Management System) solution at the beginning of the 80s, which, constantly functionally further developed, was in use for 30 years. SPAR IT has always followed technological trends and has always been a pioneer in using mobile media in the customer and warehouse area. Towards the end of the 90s, the business environment increasingly relied on standards and largely introduced SAP solutions. Against the backdrop of several company acquisitions, the main task of IT was to create uniform systems for as uniform processes as possible. Along with this dynamic international development of the group, the requirements for the supporting IT systems in terms of flexibility, quality, cost-effectiveness, and internationality continuously increased.

The existing IT organizations, which until this point were predominantly decentral, could no longer optimally accomplish the goals demanded by the group on their own. For this reason, it was decided in 2009 to unite the three existing IT sectors under the common roof of SPAR Information and Communication Services (ICS).

Goal:

Within the SPAR group, there is a very complex IT environment with 8 Active Directory Forests in various countries. While a consolidation of the Forests is planned, and a recovery scenario for the Forests has already been developed, these mechanisms are not optimally efficient due to existing technical and personnel restrictions, and thus the duration of any downtimes when problems occur is too high. This challenge was taken very seriously at SPAR, and they searched for a product that should enable a quicker and more targeted response when it becomes necessary to restore objects.

„Fundamentally, it was about quick and easy recovery, but then we discovered that the auditing is also superbly resolved, and that we can gain very important information from it."

„At a trade fair in Frankfurt, we discovered the Cygna Auditor Platform at the booth of N3K Informatik GmbH, which ostensibly came very close to our objective. A subsequent product demonstration was very promising and underscored our interest in the product. Together, we then carried out a test installation during which the product was tested by us to our satisfaction. After this successfully completed test phase, both modules, Recovery and Auditor for 8,000 users each, were therefore acquired immediately. Another pleasant side effect was that the licensing model from Cygna and N3K is very accommodating to us, as we are allowed to install the modules in each of our forests," said Harald Schörghofer, Systems Architect at SPAR.

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IMPLEMENTATION AND INITIAL EXPERIENCES:

„In mid-April 2012, the implementation of Cygna Auditor and Recovery began at SPAR. Just one week later, the first Forest was completed. However, prior to this, the installation was tested in an image of the production in a test environment. The Cygna software is simple and clear, the documentation is good, and the installation was also easily possible. This is not a given based on our experiences with other products nowadays. Therefore, product training was completely unnecessary. There were no problems during the installation and there was no need for N3K to intervene at any point," says Schörghofer. „Nevertheless, N3K was always ready and has accompanied us throughout the entire duration of the project. Any arising questions and smaller support cases have been answered quickly and competently so far."

BENEFITS:

„So far, SPAR has not been forced to have to restore objects, but it's just good to know that in case of emergency, you can trust a product that enables you to respond quickly and effectively. Especially when it comes to adhering to SLA times, this can play an important role.

„We consider the solution to be highly future-oriented. Particularly innovative is the high speed and quality of the auditing."

„I think that in the Microsoft Active Directory environment, especially in the case of recovery, there will always be points that should be improved, especially in terms of the number of steps to be performed and the speed until the recovery is successfully carried out," Schörghofer emphasizes explicitly.

„The products from Cygna Labs are very forward-looking. Above all, the speed and quality of the auditing are very well resolved. Overall, the solution helps us to respond more quickly and to better adhere to SLAs. The product itself is very user-friendly and easy to handle, and the installation is also very simple and uncomplicated." These are all reasons why other companies in the SPAR Group are considering using this solution. The administrators in the ASPIAG countries (HU, CZ, SLO, I, HR) will also implement the solution in the course of the year.

N3K NETWORK SYSTEMS

Rapidly growing IP networks require professional solutions for various facets of network management. N3K Network Systems specializes in the areas of IP Address Management, Privilege Management, and Active Directory Management, thereby developing solutions tailored to the individual requirements of customers with high expertise.

N3K supports customers throughout the entire project cycle, including needs analysis, conception, project planning, implementation, and training. Additionally, they offer extensive maintenance services, including worldwide 7x24 support and direct dial-in with the customer.

Building on this simple and effective philosophy, N3K has established itself as a leading provider in Germany. More than 50% of the DAX companies are N3K customers. With locations in the USA and Singapore, services can be provided worldwide.

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