



Gigabit Ethernet enables Kverneland Group Deutschland to boost staff productivity by increasing the speed of its network dramatically.

Kverneland's German subsidiary uses the Gigabit capability of servers in its backbone network to increase performance and eliminate time-outs during business-critical connections to remote and local servers.

Case Highlights

Profiled Organisation	Kverneland Group Deutschland GmbH
Challenge	Users at Kverneland Group Deutschland were being hindered by frequent network disconnections when trying to access vital data held on the company's file server. This was due largely to the sluggishness of its backbone network, which was running at 100Mbps. The company urgently needed to increase the performance of the network if it was to overcome the problem.
Solution	Upgrade the backbone network to Gigabit performance by making use of the Intel® PRO/1000 MT Server Adapters in its Dell® PowerEdge servers
Benefits	Elimination of time-outs for users accessing important business information held on the company's centrally located SAP ERP system in Norway and on its locally based file servers. Immediate productivity gains for German office staff because they are no longer losing their connections to the remote SAP system or to the local file servers. Data can now be copied from file servers to departmental servers in sensible timeframes.

Summary

Kverneland Group Deutschland GmbH is the German subsidiary of the world's largest specialised producer and distributor of agricultural and viticultural implements. With headquarters in Kverneland, near Stavanger in Norway, its parent Group has over 3500 employees, some 35 production sites and international sales companies, and distributes its products in over 60 countries worldwide. Kverneland Group's turnover in 2002 was around 4 billion Norwegian Kroner (approximately £329 million).

As a result of the consistently poor performance of the German operation's backbone network, office-based employees were being hampered by time-outs when accessing SAP applications running on servers in Norway, and when transferring data from the company's local file servers to other on-site servers. Throughput needed to be greatly improved if users were to have trouble-free access to the vital information they needed to perform their jobs efficiently.

By increasing the speed of the network to Gigabit performance, users now enjoy uninterrupted connectivity to the network when accessing data held on central database servers in Norway and on the company's file servers in Germany—significantly improving productivity.

Challenge: The need for fast, reliable connectivity

In common with the other international subsidiaries of the Group, Kverneland Group Deutschland runs its own administration systems locally and uses a Wide Area Network (WAN) connection to access a central SAP Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system in Norway. The sales force and service engineers use dial-up lines to gain access to the system, which runs applications for functions such as production, accounting, distribution, supply chain and human resources, and is crucial to the business operation.

Each department within the German operation runs its own computer systems to enable it to carry out its particular work. Fast, reliable communication with the ERP system in Norway is therefore essential since it is this that enables several different departments to share information more readily and to communicate with one another. The remote-access network effectively integrates all departments and functions distributed throughout the company onto a single computer system.

Of Kverneland Group Deutschland's 105 staff, around 40 percent are sales representatives and service engineers working out in the field, while the rest are based at the company's national headquarters site at Lauenförde in central Germany. Headquarters' staff are heavily dependent on the efficiency of the company's network and IT systems to carry out their work.

In 2003, Karsten Thiele, IT manager at Kverneland Group Deutschland became extremely concerned about the growing number of complaints he was receiving each day from office staff. Connections to the Norwegian system were being lost as users tried to access the information vital to their work—and it was happening more frequently.

As well as the inconvenience for users, this placed an unwelcome additional burden on the company's IT team who spent much of their time responding to calls to Kverneland's internal helpdesk. At 100Mbps, the data transfer rate on the company's backbone network was clearly no longer sufficient to support the needs of 55 office-based employees who required access throughout the day to the company's central file servers.

Process: Taking advantage of built-in Gigabit capability

"Because the maximum data transfer rate on the network was only 100Mbps, we were frequently experiencing problems when making backup copies of the data from the file servers to other servers," says Karsten Thiele. "There was just too much data to download and not enough time in which to do it. The fact that the copying of data between the servers was regularly running over the allocated timescale due to timeouts, meant we were vulnerable to loss of valuable company data," he adds.

Karsten Thiele realised that the most cost-effective way to cure the immediate problem and to prepare the network for future growth was to take advantage of the Intel Gigabit Ethernet capability built into the company's Dell PowerEdge servers that were attached to the backbone network. At the time of purchasing these servers, Kverneland chose the configuration that included Intel® Gigabit Ethernet Adapters, confident that this solution would help satisfy any future requirement for Gigabit performance as user demands grew.

Solution: Preparing for the future with the network infrastructure

Since increasing the speed of the backbone network to 1Gbps, Karsten Thiele says users are finding it much quicker to copy data from the file server and no longer experiencing the irritating time-outs in their connections to the SAP system. He is impressed by the impact Intel's Gigabit Ethernet solution has had on the performance of the network and the scope it now offers for expansion.

Karsten Thiele believes the solution has helped to future-proof his network infrastructure and will enable the company to accommodate network growth more easily. After all, Karsten Thiele's role as IT manager is to have the network keep pace with the company's business expansion. Intel's Gigabit Ethernet solution gives him the comfort of having the scope to do so whenever he needs to.

Kverneland Group Deutschland's staff are now more productive because they are no longer losing their connections to the remote SAP system or to the local file servers. This saves them a great deal of time and inconvenience in regaining links. They are now able to copy selected data from file servers to departmental servers in sensible timeframes.

Future: Gigabit to the desktop

“Now that we have implemented the solution at the server level and in the backbone network, there is no looking back,” Karsten Thiele says. “Indeed, we will be aiming to expand Gigabit performance to other areas of our operation in the future. Over the coming months, for example, we will be gradually upgrading to more powerful Dell workstations and I anticipate that once we have more than 80 percent of our PC population equipped with built-in Gigabit Ethernet adapters, say in early 2006, we will be ready to implement the Intel solution at the desktop as well,” he concludes.

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