Lexmark

Wertheimer-Group: Printer fleet „reloaded"
Seamless service from a single source in spite of the regionally distributed location structure

The Wertheimer Group (WHG for short), a regional market leader in the building material, wood and tile trade with approximately 1,000 employees at 23 locations, faced the challenge of modernising its printer fleet, which had become very outdated in some cases, especially at the company's headquarters. Rising service and maintenance had pushed the costs up considerably and were already influencing the productivity of the employees. The required renewal gave Wertheimer Dienstleistungs-Gesellschaft, which is responsible for the administration and IT infrastructure, the opportunity to implement some fundamental changes to its printer fleet strategy. The modernisation of the printer landscape was also to be extended in a cost efficient manner from the headquarters to the other affiliated companies of WHG within the context of a future-proof uniform major agreement.

The solution consisted of a strategic focus on only one single manufacturer in order to radically simplify the very heterogeneous infrastructure evolved over the company's history. With the decision in favour of Lexmark, WHG has been able to fulfil all of its wishes with respect to its new printer fleet, including a new level of cost efficiency: technically outstanding devices with advanced functions and uniform handling, compatibility which is compliant with the latest security regulations – also taking into account the GDPR – simplified administration and a flexible major agreement which, in addition to a state-of-the-art printer fleet, also guarantees across-the-board and reliable technical support for the regionally distributed locations.

Figure 1: E. Wertheimer, Baden Baden

The Company

For more than 70 years, the Wertheimer Group has been the first point of contact in the Baden region for business and private customers for construction, renovation and modernisation. The company is the regional market leader for the building material, wood and tile trade and has approximately 1,000 employees at 23 locations. The IT systems at the individual DIY stores and specialist trading centres are managed and supervised by Wertheimer Dienstleistungs-Gesellschaft mbH. Via a data centre in Freiburg, the internal service provider makes all important business applications available, including hardware, for around 700 end users. The core applications include the prohibis ERP system with an integrated document management system from the DIY group hagebau, as well as Microsoft Office365 applications.

Unternehmensgruppe
Wertheimer

Initial Situation

There are five independently operating regionally distributed companies under the umbrella of the Wertheimer Group – in addition to E. Wertheimer GmbH at the headquarters in Baden-Baden there are also Götz + Moriz GmbH in Freiburg, Maier + Kaufmann GmbH in Offenburg, Hans Quabeck Holzgroßhandel GmbH in Lörrach and ATALA GmbH & Co. Fliesen- und Sanitärhandel KG with its location in Berlin. In their sales territory, all companies are known as proven experts on the topics of construction, renovation and modernisation for both business and private customers. The IT technical administration of the Group is brought together in Wertheimer Dienstleistungs-Gesellschaft, which is based in Baden-Baden. In Freiburg, where also the main data centre of the Group is located, the IT infrastructure and procurement for all companies is organised.

The starting point for the renewal of the printer fleet was the fact that the technical infrastructure at the locations of the company headquarters was very outdated in some cases, with many devices being over ten years old. Many "emergency" service assignments had pushed up the maintenance costs of the service partners while at the same time adversely affecting the productivity of the WHG employees, so that immediate action was required. The corporate history of the Group was very much shaped by the individual companies, which operate completely independently – each company had so far decided itself which printing devices should be purchased. Peter Gründler, Head of the Data Centre + IT at WHG, and therefore also the project manager responsible for the printer fleet modernisation, summarises the aim of the project:

"We considered the situation at the company headquarters to be an opportunity to set up a uniform system across all sites in the future. Our aim was to work together with only one printer manufacturer in the future within the framework of a single major agreement through our tried-and-trusted partners at all Wertheimer companies. Starting with the renewal of the printers at the company headquarters, the major agreement was to offer the possibility, if necessary, to integrate the other branch stores and companies within WHG as flexibly as possible in order to equip them with the latest printers."

For the standardisation of the future printer fleet, not only the historically evolved use of a wide variety of model ranges – from up to eight different manufacturers, including Lexmark, depending on the company – had to be taken into account, but also the extensive regional distribution of the individual locations and fields of application. Project Manager Peter Gründler: "

80 per cent of our printers at the sales locations are used in the sales departments and in the field of warehouse logistics, and 20 per cent in administration. Many printers are used directly in the sales rooms – that is, directly at the consultation location – so that our sales personnel can print out the required customer documents directly after the consultation and placement of the order."

The Challenge

By changing over to the new target strategy of "one manufacturer", the company wanted to fulfil two main requirements, as Peter Gründler confirms: *"From a user point of view, we have many employees who often need to switch between the locations and departments. It was therefore very important for us that the future devices could also be operated in the same way across the various locations. In addition, there was an important aspect from the perspective of the IT Administration team. By deciding in favour of a single manufacturer, we would only need one driver software that we could manage from a central location. The aim was*

1SWWM4287

to eliminate the costs and effort required to repeatedly carry out new driver adjustments manually for our previously heterogeneous printer fleet."

At that time the Group had been collaborating with two service partners – Horst Höll and Resin – regarding its printer and toner management for its companies in Baden-Baden, Freiburg and Offenburg. As the level of satisfaction with the service provided by the Lexmark partners was very high, these two long-standing trusted partners were also to remain the main contact partners for the new single-manufacturer concept. Thus, in the search for the future printer supplier, a further core challenge was to find a manufacturer that, together with the two existing partners, could provide support that would easily bridge the sometimes considerable number of kilometres between all stores and branches of the regionally distributed WHG. Peter Gründler: *"Of course we had discussions with various manufacturers, but from the very beginning, with Wolfgang Weber from Lexmark and Jürgen Grüßinger from Horst Höll we had some really pro-active contacts who took over the sometimes very complex coordination between the companies, the partners and us, the Wertheimer Dienstleistungsgesellschaft (service company). So we felt perfectly advised in our discussions with Lexmark and Horst Höll from the very beginning. And then Lexmark was able – together with its partners – to quickly convince the various contact persons at the branch stores – from the Managing Director to the site manager – of the new concept. Together with our support partners Horst Höll and Resin, Lexmark forms a reliable entity to which we readily provide access to the entire operational region of the Wertheimer Group."*

But of course WHG also had further expectations with regard to the new major agreement. By focusing on only one manufacturer, the previously different price and purchasing conditions were to be transformed into a uniform maintenance price for colour and black-and-white printers for the entire Group. Jürgen Grüssinger, Senior Consultant at the partner Horst Höll, explains the new framework conditions:

"For the new contract design, in consultation with Lexmark we dismissed the previous concept of a basic flat rate with free volumes to introduce a highly flexible billing system that satisfies the requirements of WHG perfectly. A cost centre invoicing system was introduced and now it is possible to purchase or even only lease equipment according to individual requirements."
"Furthermore, the major agreement is so flexible that WHG can have new devices set up as required, even beyond the initially agreed equipment volumes, without having to enter into new contract negotiations or maintenance contracts, for example when setting up a new sales department at individual locations." **Hannes Schwöppe, Leiter Vertrieb Solutions at the Partner Resin.**

Figure 2: Wwertheimer – hagebau DYI store Lichtenau

The Solution

Only after an extensive test phase lasting approximately eight weeks in a model environment at the Freiburg data centre, during which the Lexmark devices were thoroughly tested, did the actual roll-out to the individual locations take place. As part of the pilot run, the WHG IT team ran test print-outs from its ERP application over all printer models they planned to use. The technical results were extremely satisfactory, from the printed image to the handling of the devices. After the completion of the test phase in November 2019, more than 50 new printers were installed at the sites within a period of just one week. Right from the initial phase of the project, WHG was able to significantly streamline its printer fleet and currently has devices from only four different

manufacturers in use, which will be replaced step-by-step by Lexmark printers in the future. The model ranges of the 55 currently operated Lexmark printers come from only two product families in order to make the toner supply more efficient. Nine A4 mono-single function printers (SFPs) for small and large working groups (model ranges M5255 and M3250), 36 A4 multifunction devices (MFPs) for large and small working groups in black-and-white and colour (model ranges XM5365, XM3250 and XC4150) and 10 large A3 colour laser MFPs of the XC9235 range.

Figure 3: Götz + Moriz, Freiburg

The Lexmark printers stand out not only because of their intuitive user guidance not requiring lengthy familiarisation but also due to the security package supplied as standard. For example, the important aspect of compliance with the latest GDPR regulations can be guaranteed, even for scanning. WHG had already indicated in advance that in the future it will reduce print-outs and increasingly scan and archive its documents. The Lexmark scan-to-mail function also secures this workflow: from reliable data encryption to controlled device access. Furthermore, WHG benefits from the active toner management system centrally introduced for each Lexmark device used within the Group. The supply and exchange of toner cartridges is done automatically now, with Horst Höll and Resin also ensuring that the used toner cartridges are properly recycled. In addition, Horst Höll's fleet management system assists the technical support team by means of the automatic

technical inspection process, so that all service managers will be notified immediately if problems arise.

Outlook

WHG is already very pleased with the measurable positive results of the structural change in its output landscape. The management is very satisfied with the change of strategy towards a uniform major agreement for the entire group of companies, with the new across-the-board support for the nationwide sales territory from trusted service partners, and with the final decision in favour of Lexmark as the only supplier of its printer fleet in the future. Thanks to the uniform, clear and intuitive user interface of the Lexmark printers, the Group is being confronted with much fewer user problems. The administration and maintenance expenditure has also decreased noticeably. Apart from the significantly simplified driver distribution system, there are hardly any breakdowns, as the old devices are being seamlessly replaced by new Lexmark models after reaching the end of their normal service life. The new devices are already pre-configured and connected by the partners directly at the respective location when they are installed. The Wertheimer IT team therefore saves itself the trouble of having to visit the store and only has to integrate the new devices into the network. Following the company headquarters, the other companies are also to be completely changed over to Lexmark devices in the near future. WHG is expecting a cost reduction of up to 50 per cent in the future compared to the pre-Lexmark period.

1SWWM4287