



Online Gaming Operator Scores Big with Cloud Solution

Overview

Country or Region: Germany
Industry: Media & Entertainment

Customer Profile

German software developer InnoGames is among the largest Massive Multiplayer Online (MMO) gaming operators in the world with about 100 million registered users.

Business Situation

InnoGames sought a reliable email service and collaboration tools to support the company's rapid growth while freeing up IT staff to focus on revenue-driving projects rather than infrastructure.

Solution

The gaming operator chose Office 365 for its flexible licensing, an array of cloud-based productivity tools, and 24/7 support.

Benefits

- Decrease demand on IT staff
- Foster greater collaboration
- Easily scale to planned growth

Office 365 is a great value for businesses. There's no upfront investment, yet you get full-functionality applications and 24/7 support at a very fair price.

Michael Zillmer, Founder and Chief Operating Officer, InnoGames

Hamburg-based InnoGames is among the top three online gaming operators in Germany, with more than 100 million registered users worldwide. The company was born out of a hobby project by brothers Eike and Hendrik Klindworth and Michael Zillmer, who created the game "Tribal Wars" in 2003. The trio formed InnoGames in 2007, and success came quickly as the company grew to 230 employees today.

Amid rapid growth, InnoGames wanted to refocus its limited IT staff from time-intensive troubleshooting issues with its hosted email provider to high-value business intelligence projects. InnoGames discovered that Microsoft Office 365 would not only solve many of its issues, but it would also benefit the company in unexpected ways.



Situation

Online gaming generates a tremendous amount of data, and making it available to help make games more engaging and uncover new ways to monetize them is a top priority for InnoGames. However, the company's internal IT team was bogged down supporting its growth.

With plans to grow its Hamburg staff to 280 by the end of 2013, InnoGames Chief of IT Christopher Lindemann knew it was crucial that the company refocus its small IT staff on supporting critical business projects like Business Intelligence, rather than on administrative tasks and troubleshooting email issues. InnoGames had also expanded beyond Germany, with two remote offices in South Korea and Sao Paulo, Brazil. With more than 170 community managers and more than 1,600 volunteers, the gaming giant had a growing need for easy-to-use collaboration tools and greater mobility.

"We had standardized on Office 2010 / Office 2011 for Mac," says Lindemann. "But our IT team needed to spend less time juggling licenses and escalated help desk requests for email. We plan to add many more users in a short period of time, and that takes careful coordination." InnoGames also wanted to provide Microsoft Outlook and Office functionality for all employees, including an important set of Linux users who were operating without an integrated email, calendaring, and document-management system.

InnoGames turned to Hamburg-based Layer2, a Microsoft Cloud Accelerate Partner, for help in integrating business intelligence information to employees through Microsoft SharePoint on site. Discussions eventually included InnoGames' search for a robust messaging solution.

Solution

Layer2 led InnoGames to discover Microsoft Office 365, a cloud-based suite of calendaring and productivity tools with anywhere access to email and 24/7 support. "Office 365 holds a lot of potential for our business and provides a great value," says Zillmer. "We looked at Google Enterprise Mail and we just didn't trust our data with them. We know what we're getting with Microsoft."

Moving to the cloud has saved the small IT staff significant hours each week, notes Lindemann. "Deploying Office 365 to new users is simple and takes very little time," he says. "We had to invest some time to get everyone up and running, but we've reclaimed that time and more because there are fewer help desk requests and minimal incremental admin tasks." Lindemann notes that round-the-clock support from Microsoft also decreased the demands on his staff. "Our IT team is looking to take the company further by integrating systems and getting more value out of these new tools. We expect to roll out Office 2013 ourselves, and that would have been a nightmare previously. Moving to the cloud has made our jobs easier."

Mobile access has been a welcome addition, adds Zillmer. "Checking email on their company smartphones has already become second nature to employees. They just need an internet connection and they're up and running. It's so convenient with cloud-based email because it's available anywhere you are and any time you need it."

And scaling the services is simple as the company grows. "We're planning to increase our staff this year, but now we don't have to worry about buying new servers and adding IT staff to maintain them," says Lindemann. InnoGames plans

to extend Office 365 services to its elite community managers in the near future. "Microsoft offers flexible licensing options, which makes it easy for us to adjust as our needs change," he says.

Benefits

By moving to the cloud, InnoGames has reduced demands on its small IT staff, enabled greater collaboration and mobility, and regained control over its IT services.

Gaining Time for Projects

InnoGames employees are all now using the same version of Microsoft Office, and the consistency in applications has reduced the number of help desk tickets. "Office 365 has freed up IT staff to focus on growth-related projects rather than daily tasks," says Lindemann. "We can integrate programs and features more easily now. And we know that our software will always be current. No more wasted time chasing down versions and licenses."

Easier Connections

Office 365 has provided InnoGames with robust calendaring and conferencing tools that help make scheduling meetings easier and more productive. "We're a fast-growing company and whether we're scheduling interviews or working together on designs for a new part of a game, these tools have made everyone's jobs easier," says Zillmer.

Anywhere access has led to more productive communication for InnoGames developers and employees, including its Linux users. "Our employees can use any mobile device they want, and Office 365 works on all of them. This has made it easy for employees to stay in contact while traveling and keep on top of priorities," adds Lindemann.

Scalability and Control

Lindemann says that adding users as the company grows is easy with the Office 365 flexible licensing plans. "As our staff continues to grow, we're not concerned about getting bogged down with day by day user administration. Even on short notice, we can add a user and get them to work in very little time," he says.

InnoGames had support issues with its hosted email solution, but Office 365 offers a 99.9% uptime guarantee with dedicated support staff to answer questions. "Email outages are a thing of the past," notes Lindemann. "We now have reliable backups and disaster recovery capabilities, should we ever need them. And the level of control with Exchange Online is great. It's simple to manage multiple accounts in a browser window."

Overall, InnoGames' move to Office 365 has proven to be a smart strategy. "Office 365 is a great value for businesses," says Zillmer. "There's no upfront investment, yet you get full-functionality applications and 24/7 support at a very fair price."

For More Information

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www.microsoft.com

For more information about Layer2 products and services, visit the website at: www.layer2.de

For more information about InnoGames products and services, visit the website at: www.innogames.com

Microsoft Office 365

The new Office provides anywhere access to your familiar Office applications—plus email, calendar, video conferencing, and your most current documents—on almost any device, from PCs to smartphones to tablets.

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