

Case Study Somnitec

PRTG helps Somnitec AG
deliver Swiss IT precision





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Swiss cloud and IT service provider Somnitech AG, with the help of the PRTG experts at CORP-IT, has set up comprehensive monitoring to maximize the reliability of its customers' IT systems.



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Mirco Blöchliger, Somnitech AG

As a long-standing partner of Microsoft and SAP, Somnitech AG offers end-to-end business IT solutions for medium-sized companies. In particular, the company specializes in hybrid cloud applications. Somnitech stands out from other providers thanks to its own private cloud platform, professional support service, and outstanding expertise in the area of Microsoft Dynamics 365 and SAP/SAP HANA.

• Starting point

Somnitech was spending far too much time, effort, and money due to non-homogeneous monitoring based on SCOM and Control-M.

• Project

A three-month inventory and planning phase conducted by CORP-IT, followed by the establishment of a test environment and the gradual "go-live" with the assurance of proven threshold values.

• Result

More reliable services thanks to a centralized monitoring system that incorporates infrastructure, networks, databases, and SAP systems into a single interface. Less work thanks to the automation of numerous processes. Increased security thanks to alert and escalation management for the help desk and service department.

Many tools, much work, much hassle

In order to secure its IT services, Somnitech used Microsoft SCOM (System Center Operations Manager), Control-M, and native monitoring services such as those offered by Microsoft and SAP. In addition, the company was already using an instance of PRTG. For administrators, this mishmash caused all kinds of problems:

- Excessive time and effort to maintain the many monitoring tools
- Inadequate monitoring of certain systems, or unnecessary repeat monitoring
- Lack of a centralized overview of the entire IT
- Complex (and expensive) management of alerts
- Lack of standard SLA monitoring and reporting that allowed for a comprehensive overview from a centralized tool

At some point, it became clear that Somnitech needed to revamp its entire monitoring system to meet its strict quality goals.

Monitoring by experts

Somnitec AG is a reputed IT service provider with many highly qualified employees. Nevertheless, the company relied on the experts at CORP-IT to develop and implement its new monitoring system. The reasoning for this was simple: Somnitec administrators were busy with their own projects and tasks, and the implementation of such a system demands a certain level of experience. Although tools such as PRTG by Paessler are easy to install and set up, an expert is often required to tailor the tool to the specific requirements of larger and more complex IT environments. Only then can the software provide the overview and performance that make a difference.



Inventory and project planning

Before the actual project began, a thorough inventory was completed. The existing monitoring system was reviewed to ascertain whether certain elements could be retained for the new system, and strategies were subsequently developed for the migration of these elements. At the same time, additional elements were identified to be integrated into the overarching system. Here, too, it was necessary to develop concepts for the monitoring and integration of these elements. The new system was to monitor the entire infrastructure distributed across several locations (including the entire network), the core services (including database applications), and the SAP environments.

Almost immediately, it was decided that PRTG would replace all the other tools as the main monitoring solution. In total, the inventory determined a need for more than 20,000 PRTG sensors, with one sensor representing a measurement point containing multiple “channels” (i.e., query values). This could be a simple ping sensor or a complex database query. 20,000 sensors meant a massive horizontal scaling of the underlying installation. It therefore quickly became clear that Somnitec would need a Paessler PRTG Enterprise Monitor license, which would allow for the use of enough PRTG servers to achieve this scaling.

The entire inventory and project planning phase took around three months. Thomas Wächter of CORP-IT emphasized the importance of this phase for the success of the overall project: “Once you have an environment that exceeds a certain size and level of complexity, inventory and planning become the most important part in the development of a new monitoring system. The slightest omission or error during the planning phase can lead to huge delays in the implementation of the project. It’s even more important that project planning issues be identified and corrected during the implementation phase, as such issues can lead to monitoring glitches which prevent errors and malfunctions from being detected in a timely manner, subsequently causing damage to systems and violating the terms of service agreements.”

Project implementation

The entire project had to be implemented during ongoing business operations – after all, Somnitech couldn't simply stop monitoring their customer-related systems during the period of transition. As an additional challenge, there were numerous delays due to Covid 19. In order to prevent interruptions in the monitoring and ensure as smooth a transition as possible, a test system was set up to run concurrently with the existing monitoring system. CORP-IT developed special tools which made it possible to transfer numerous settings and methods from the old to the new system, thus greatly facilitating several parts of the migration process.

After a thorough test phase, the test environment gradually went live and the previous monitoring systems were switched off. The result was a homogeneous, centralized monitoring system consisting of PRTG, CORP-IT standard plugins for PRTG (such as the PRTG SLA and PRTG DB plugins), and scripts and device templates developed by CORP-IT especially for the project.

Scaling and structure

PRTG Network Monitor serves as the basis for the new, centralized monitoring solution developed for Somnitech AG. For larger customers, Somnitech uses PRTG "remote probes," or independent services that collect network data via various protocols, then send this data to the main PRTG interface. Thanks to optional TLS encryption and an extensive rights and roles system, remote monitoring can be set up securely and easily using these remote probes. Remote probes are an effective way to set up multiple, independent monitoring scenarios with a single PRTG license. After all, each license comes with an unlimited number of probes.

With PRTG Enterprise Monitor, any number of servers can be used to 1) share the load with the remote probes and thereby improve the overall performance, and 2) provide the framework for the entire monitoring environment to allow for physical and digital structures in the Somnitech infrastructure and customer landscape to be displayed in the breakdown of the individual servers and probes. Somnitech therefore uses many remote probes that are specially configured for its customers. This coordinated deployment of PRTG servers and remote probes at different locations also enables Somnitech to keep a constant eye on systems in the event of disruptions, to immediately get to the root of malfunctions, and to quickly take action before the onset of problems.

Help desk

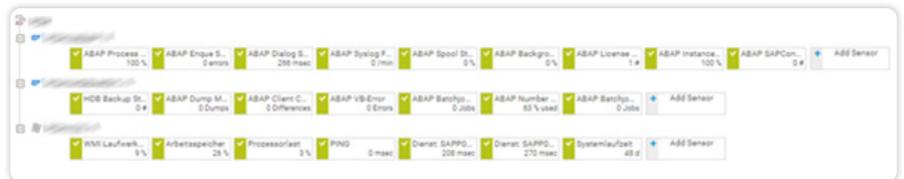
A monitoring system must not only quickly detect problems, but also be able to immediately alert the respective employees in the event of anomalies. CORP-IT therefore created scripts that enhance the original alert and escalation management feature in PRTG by automatically taking absences and on-call times of Somnitech help desk employees into account during the notification process. As a result, Somnitech can now rest assured that each alert is immediately sent via Microsoft Teams to the relevant support channel, as well as by SMS to the respective (and available) experts with the error message and team ID.

Databases

Databases run as core services at Somnitech. As a result, they are vital to the proper functioning of business processes. In particular, the HANA and MS-SQL databases (used for SAP) play a crucial role at Somnitech AG. Thanks to the migration scripts and the PRTG DB plugin from CORP-IT, numerous queries and threshold values for monitoring the databases could be transferred from SCOM to PRTG. During the transfer, the DB plugin bundled the database information into the above-mentioned "channels" (individual values of a PRTG sensor) to significantly speed up and improve the monitoring of the databases. In addition to HANA and MS SQL, PRTG and the CORP-IT PRTG DB plugin monitor databases and operating systems such as MySQL, Sybase, Oracle, ESX, LINUX, DYNAMICS AX, and Microsoft D365 ERP & CRM. Somnitech uses a total of 3,000 sensors with 12,000 channels to monitor around 1,000 databases.

SAP monitoring

CORP-IT also integrated Somnitech's SAP systems into PRTG to provide for more detailed and relevant information on the status and performance of these systems. In addition, SAP monitoring is now integrated into the centralized monitoring provided by PRTG. CORP-IT used standard SAP templates for the integration, and worked closely with the SAP experts at Somnitech to ensure all relevant information was taken into consideration. Spool, enqueue, syslog, process list, license, and SAPconnect sensors are some of the sensors that are now in use. In total, Somnitech uses PRTG to monitor more than 60 PAS (primary application servers) and 20 Java instances in its SAP environment.



Automation

Given the scope of the monitoring, the question of automation arose almost immediately. PRTG already came with a number of automation features, such as the automatic updating of the software for probes and servers (under the supervision of the respective technician). In addition, custom device templates were developed in close cooperation with the experts at Somnitech AG. These templates define the values to be monitored, as well as the threshold values for alerts and notifications.

Another development involved linking Somnitech's inventory system to the monitoring via the PRTG API. Scripts and device templates were created to automatically allow for new devices appearing in the inventory to be monitored by PRTG. The CORP-IT PRTG SLA plugin also enables maintenance windows to be automatically included in the monitoring. Once the SLA plugin was installed for the first time, Somnitech was able to complete the configuration autonomously, with CORP-IT simply on hand to answer any questions. Felix Strehle of Somnitech AG explains: "PRTG was extremely flexible during the integration of our systems, allowing us to automate many of our processes. This has saved us an enormous amount of time, increased reliability, and freed up space for other things."

One tool, little work, no hassle

Somnitech AG has reaped a number of benefits from the project, including:

- A centralized monitoring solution for the entire IT, including distributed locations and customer systems
- Reduction of time, energy, and money spent on everyday monitoring
- Less complexity and increased automation

Mirco Blöchliger of Somnitech AG: "The fact that we were able to replace SCOM and Control-M with PRTG and simultaneously expand our monitoring is nothing short of extraordinary. Thanks to significant improvements in performance, the integration of all monitoring (including that of databases and SAP services) into PRTG, numerous automation options, and the consolidation of all locations into the centralized monitoring system, we have been able to greatly relieve our help desk and provide for the most reliable and comprehensive of monitoring services. PRTG has proven to be the perfect solution for our complex needs. Our new monitoring system creates real added value, both for us and our customers."

Do you still have questions about Paessler & PRTG?

Contact us and our experts will be happy to help you.

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About Somnitech AG

Somnitech AG is an IT service provider from Switzerland with more than 70 employees who specialize in cloud platform, application & business process management, and modern workplace solutions. As a Microsoft Gold Partner and Cloud Solution Provider, its focus is on hybrid cloud solutions for SMEs, including those with international locations. Somnitech AG boasts its very own private cloud platform and professional support service to offer its customers comprehensive business IT solutions, from consulting to operations. The Somnitech portfolio is also complemented by its managed services of Microsoft products, its partnership with SAP, and its many years of experience in the operation of SAP/SAP HANA environments. Thanks to its expertise in Microsoft Dynamics 365, Somnitech helps customers implement processes, meet business requirements, and thrive in the digital world of tomorrow.



About CORP-IT

CORP-IT is a long-standing alliance and implementation partner of Paessler. In addition to a range of standardized extensions for the PRTG tool, CORP-IT offers customized implementation and development strategies for monitoring with PRTG. Thanks to its many years of experience with IBM and SAP and its high level of expertise with PRTG, CORP-IT has become known as a specialist of comprehensive and demanding monitoring projects.

ABOUT PAESSLER AG

Paessler believes monitoring plays a vital part in reducing humankind's consumption of resources. Monitoring data helps its customers save resources, from optimizing their IT, OT and IoT infrastructures to reducing energy consumption or emissions – for our future and our environment. That is why Paessler offers monitoring solutions for businesses across all industries and all sizes, from SMB to large enterprises. Paessler works with renowned partners, and together they tackle the monitoring challenges of an ever-changing world.

Since 1997, when Paessler first introduced PRTG Network Monitor, it has combined its in-depth monitoring knowledge with an innovative spirit. Today, more than 500,000 users in over 170 countries rely on PRTG and other Paessler solutions to monitor their complex IT, OT and IoT infrastructures. Paessler's products empower its customers to monitor everything, and thus help them optimize their resources.

Check out all the possibilities within the Paessler Solutions Universe



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