CASE STUDY

GERMANY

SERVICES

# HIGH PERFORMANCE NETWORK ENABLES WORKPLACE DYNAMISM FOR GERMAN IT SERVICES PROVIDER — AND CREATES SHOWROOM FOR INNOVATION

THINK ABOUT IT
DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

Design and build a new head office to allow workplace mobility and to showcase smart building management.

The events of 2020 led many organisations to question the role of the office. Is it a functional space? A social space? A brand statement?

In truth, the office of the future may be a blend of all three: a place to meet, work and collaborate and the physical embodiment of an organisation's values. It is to the great good fortune of Think About IT, a German IT services provider, that discussions around its new head office, in 2019, took on board these questions.

"As a service provider, we sell quality," says Jan-Hendrik Abels, Think About IT's CTO. "I believe a beautiful head office can be inspiring for our employees and our customers."

## CREATING AN INTELLIGENT NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

The building, opened in January 2021, features floor-to-ceiling windows, polished concrete floors, e-charging points for cars and an on-site gym. In aesthetics, it resembles the offices of an architect rather than an IT service provider.

The building has more than just style. It is also smart.

The network, secured by Aruba ClearPass and overseen by Aruba Central, is underpinned by Aruba CX wired backbone in the DC. This, together with the scalable and unified wired and wireless access environment, provides a platform on which to manage the building and explore new digital innovations.



### REQUIREMENTS
- Centralise management and security of high-performance network across seven locations
- Unify LAN and WLAN architecture and management
- Enable workplace mobility for teams
- Create a platform to showcase digital innovation

### SOLUTION
- Aruba SD-Branch Architecture
- Aruba CX 6300M Series Core Switches
- Aruba CX 6300F Series Access Switches
- Aruba CX 6200F POE+ Access Switches
- Aruba OS 2930F POE+ Branch Access Switches
- Wi-Fi 6 Unified Indoor Access Points
- Aruba Central Cloud-Native Management Platform
- ClearPass Policy Manager VM
- ClearPass NAC
- Branch Gateways
- DC Headend Gateways (VPNC)
- Aruba UXI Sensors

### OUTCOMES
- Cuts network and NAC configuration times from days to minutes and enables zero-touch deployments
- Simplifies the adoption of location-based and asset-tracking services as a future strategic initiative
- Enables complete workplace mobility and a hybrid workplace
- Streamlines network management across multiple locations, enabling a holistic view of the infrastructure

Abels says Aruba was chosen because of the "wholeness" of its thinking. "It was important we considered the added value the network could bring," says Abels. "It's not only about managing a switch or access point. With Aruba we create an intelligent infrastructure."

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**JAN-HENDRIK ABELS**
CTO, Think About IT

## DEMONSTRATING THE POSSIBILITIES OF SMART BUILDINGS

With Covid-19 still raging, the first few months saw just 30% occupancy. Wireless mobility and the adoption of Microsoft Teams® allowed staff to work from anywhere in the building. However, this is just the start of a journey, says Abels. Think About IT has so far implemented just a small number of the functionalities the new network architecture allows.

"Up to now our work has been pragmatic. The excitement comes in the future," he says.

At the head office, the Aruba Edge Services Platform (ESP) will support access controls, environmental sensors, desk- and room-booking and navigation. There are also plans to link the e-charging stations, with alerts sent to staff when their car is fully charged. All of this will be used to demonstrate the possibilities of smart building management – and to demonstrate



Think About IT's smart building services to customers while creating brand new experiences for the employees.

"There will no doubt be elements of our head office that will resonate with different customers. I'm certain the healthcare sector, for instance, will be interested in wayfinding, or asset-tracking for automotive customers," says Abels.

## REDUCING COMPLEXITY TO REDIRECT RESOURCES

The new head office is an outward expression of the company's embrace of innovation. There is also a less obvious operational story.

"Many of our customers want to make their infrastructure less complex. They want to manage fewer machines. We're the same," says Abels. "Our adoption of cloud-native solutions like Aruba Central is an example of this: an AI-enabled single point of management with a view over everything.

"Reducing complexity means we have more time to spend with our customers – reducing the complexity of their operations."

### Simplified but robust HQ network architecture

Think About IT's data centre is located at the head office. It has a robust and scalable spine-leaf architecture built around Aruba CX 6300M and 6300F switches. WLAN access is provided via Aruba CX 6200F series switches.

The staff enjoy secure Wi-Fi 6 access delivered via Aruba. Wired and wireless access are consistently monitored and managed via ClearPass Policy Manager and the infrastructure is managed through the cloud-based Aruba Central platform.

### Delivering HQ-like branch connectivity and services

Fast high-density Wi-Fi and unified wired and wireless infrastructure are not exclusive to the head office. The company's remote locations enjoy centrally managed and secured internet-based WAN connectivity based on the Aruba SD-Branch architecture.

Depending on the size and number of users, each branch hosts one or more Aruba 9004 Branch Gateways which connect, via the internet, to an Aruba 7030 series Headend Gateway (VPNC) cluster at the DC. Thus, all corporate traffic is securely tunnelled between branch and DC, providing secure local internet breakout and WAN connectivity. Access policies, SLAs and connectivity services are managed centrally.

### AI-based self-healing and experience optimisation

While network management and supervision are made simple with Aruba Central, the Think About IT team has taken seamless and trouble-free connectivity one step further by monitoring it from the perspective of a user or device.

By placing Aruba User Experience Insight (UXI) sensors in key locations, the team can enjoy a real-time view of how applications, services and all other critical parameters of the network perform. Most problems, often due to configuration issues on a client device or a remote service, are detected and proactively fixed even before anyone notices them. However, when the team does receive a now increasingly less frequent support call, the task of diagnosing and remediating the issue is hugely simplified.

### SIMPLIFYING THE PRACTICALITIES OF BUSINESS EXPANSION

Think About IT has seven locations across Germany, with its new head office in Bochum. The company has grown dramatically in recent years, from 15 employees to 140 and it has seen a five-fold growth in turnover in the past six years. Continued expansion is expected.

The Aruba approach establishes a network architecture that can be applied to various sizes of branch office to enhance business agility and facilitate rapid growth and response to market opportunities. As the company expands, it can move quickly, securely set up onsite project teams with customers or integrate acquisitions with minimum fuss.

The IT team can define branch network configuration templates and security policies which they can simply push out and deploy to existing or new locations. This zero-touch provisioning capability helps save significant time and costs, eliminating the need for specialised staff on-site and significantly reducing travel.

"Once we've fitted the infrastructure we can have a new site configured and operational within minutes, just by clicking on Central and deploying required configurations and security policies," explains Abels. "This scalability and portability is extremely valuable to us.

"In Aruba we have a partner that not only provides the network technology but that also acts as a gateway into innovative applications, new integrations and optimised experiences."

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