



» Commerzbank AG: Voice over IP in the branch of the future «

Open Communication references

www.siemens.com/open

SIEMENS



» Summary «

Today Commerzbank is Germany's second-largest bank with approximately 35,000 employees, of whom 8,100 work abroad, serving more than 8 million customers worldwide. In Germany, the Commerzbank Group maintains a nationwide network of more than 1,000 branches.

As part of the ongoing development of its communication infrastructure, Commerzbank is deploying the SIP-based HiPath 8000, Real Time IP System. Following a successful pilot project this will be used as a platform for IP communication in the bank's corporate network and across its branches. The main drivers behind the decision to deploy HiPath 8000 was its compliance with open standards, enabling improved flexibility, cost advantages and a high degree of failure safety.

The task:

The company wished to future-proof its communication infrastructure through standardizing platforms and applications, to ensure that processes in the "branches of the future" are better supported and employee availability guaranteed. Further challenges of assured reliability of communication and cost reduction were of major importance.

The solution:

- HiPath 8000, SIP-based Real Time IP System
- optiPoint 420, IP-terminal devices
- HiPath Xpressions, unified messaging solution
- HiPath ComAssistant, rule-based routing solution for ease in making telephone calls

The benefit:

- Cost savings thanks to IP communication (one network for voice and data) and reduction in the total number of communication systems
- Lower maintenance and operating costs through standardization and use of a central platform
- Increased flexibility from central administration
- Improved communication workflow and higher productivity in the branches using applications such as HiPath Xpressions and HiPath ComAssistant
- Improved support of business processes in the "branches of the future" through a central voicemail service
- Survivability concept to ensure individuals can be reached by phone in the result of an emergency

» "Voice over IP is now operationally mature. Further delay in introducing this technology will result in competitive disadvantages."

Roland Schneider
Head of Network Services in the IT production service division at
Commerzbank head office

www.commerzbank.com

COMMERZBANK 



» Optimal customer care using cutting-edge communication technology «

Commerzbank is revolutionizing customer care through its use of cutting-edge communication technology in their "bank branches of the future". This concept is progressively being turned into reality with administration and consulting being more rigorously separated than in the past. What Commerzbank wishes to achieve with this new sales concept is a visible improvement in the quality of consulting offered to customers.

As part of this initiative, the small, flexible branches with between five and ten employees will no longer have a till function, concentrating instead entirely on advising customers. Activities which are not directly related to this will be transferred to other branches, automated or discontinued. This approach will be supported by a new generation of ATMs (Automated Teller Machines) and cutting-edge communication technology using Voice over IP (VoIP).

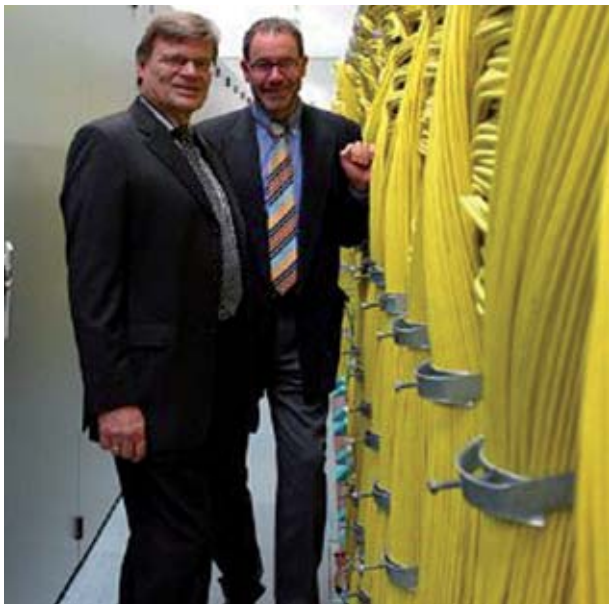
An essential element is a mandatory availability model which details, for example, what needs to happen during a customer call. The basis for this is the HiPath 8000 IP communication system. By the middle of next year this system will be used to convert a total of approximately 200 smaller Commerzbank sites in Germany to Voice over IP, these locations being equipped with the optiPoint 420 digital

terminal devices, proxy servers and gateways. An innovation contract agreed between Commerzbank and Siemens provides the strategic framework for the smooth and gradual transition to Voice over IP.

Progressive migration to VoIP and SIP as an open standard

A key objective of further development was to consolidate and standardize the diverse communication landscape which comprised approximately 820 telephone systems from different manufacturers. The migration to IP capable HiPath systems from Siemens Enterprise Communications has now been largely completed. Approximately 600 HiPath platforms are now being supported centrally from Frankfurt by remote access. The previous ATM network (Asynchronous Transfer Mode) for voice communication was replaced by the IP network in 2006.

HiPath 8000 is being rolled-out further in the next step in Commerzbank's strategy, which Roland Schneider sums up with the two terms "Everything over IP" and "IP over everything". This means that all the network technologies used in the bank support the Internet protocol and all applications and services – whether in the data, voice or video arena – must be IP-capable and run over a shared network.



» Open communication platforms for future proof development «

Roland Schneider, Commerzbank's Head of Network Services, IT production service division at Frankfurt am Main, explains the rationale behind their migration strategy: *"It would not be cost effective to replace all of the existing communication systems in one go"*. Another potent argument for those in charge of the bank was that the HiPath 8000 platform rigorously supports the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) as an open industry standard. Standardization allows systems and SIP components from other manufacturers to be linked to the platform, thus reducing dependence on a single vendor.

High availability is the banking business's top priority

Equally critical was the HiPath 8000's redundancy and high availability concept in which survivability components ensure that telephone calls can be carried on and accepted in all circumstances. In the event of trouble with the Wide Area Network (WAN), an intelligent proxy server establishes a connection with the exchange via the gateway, allowing operations to be maintained – albeit with restricted functionality.

The HiPath 8000 softswitch itself is a carrier class system running on reliable, fault-tolerant Linux servers and protected by clustering technologies against hardware and software failures. *"This high degree of availability is very important to us because our top priority is that our customers should be able to contact the branches"*, says Roland Schneider.



» Centralized applications increase flexibility and reduce cost «

A key advantage of HiPath 8000 is the ability to provide central services and applications easily. Today, for example, every branch employee is able to access a voice message system – HiPath Xpressions, which is installed on a central server. This removes the need for local involvement with the technology, which not only saves considerable maintenance costs but also increases the bank's flexibility.

The Web-based application HiPath ComAssistant allows employees to manage incoming voice and e-mail contacts from the desktop and also provides them with CTI features (Computer Telephony Integration) such as click-to-dial, call logging, searching of the bank's electronic address book and a "one number service". In the foreseeable future, Commerzbank also wants to introduce other central applications, such as the OpenScape collaboration application, for example. This allows the current availability status of users to be displayed in real-time and enables people to contact each other via the quickest means.

"Previously our thinking was focused on convergence at network level; we are now following this by workstation integration", says Jochen Kiffel, Head of Voice & Video Services, IT production service division at Commerzbank head office.

It is obvious to expect productivity benefits from this and other applications, but these had to be detailed within the business case before the project commenced. *"It is very difficult to substantiate numerically whether an employee saves ten minutes by using Voice over IP and associated applications and thereby works more efficiently",* says the Head of Voice & Video Services. Only measurable facts were included in the cost-benefit analysis leading to a suggested percentage cost reduction in the doubledigit range.

The positive impact in Commerzbank's "business case" came mainly from savings in the MAC arena (moves, adds and changes), from maintenance and simplification of system administration. Further cost saving has been derived from the fact that is now also possible to use IP to connect smaller branches to the bank's Corporate Network. Previously this was generally not cost effective to do so.

In a pilot project lasting several months, Commerzbank's telecommunications experts, working with developers from Siemens Enterprise Communications, created an optimal customized solution for handling branch business processes.

In future, the bank's branches and other European countries will also benefit from using the central services and applications of the HiPath 8000 platform in Frankfurt. *"National boundaries are no longer of any relevance in this infrastructure; all that counts are the quality and availability of the network",* says Jochen Kiffel.



