



Techniker Krankenkasse uses FACT24 to safeguard its IT systems' restart times
HIGH AVAILABILITY REQUIRES NEW ALARM MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Client



Sector

Insurance

Problem

As in many other companies, at Techniker Krankenkasse (TK) almost all business processes are IT-based. Potential emergencies thus arise in the event of IT failure. In the event of an incident, the TK's business continuity management team goes into action to restore core functions within only four hours. In the past, alerting the emergency teams took longer than the targeted IT restart time. The manual alerting system had to be replaced!

Solution

Strict criteria were applied in selecting a notification system. Given that the new system had to operate independently of the company's own telephone system in an emergency, FACT24 Notification and Conferencing System was an obvious choice. After only four weeks the service was fully integrated into the TK's business continuity management, without the need to install additional hardware or software.

Benefits

- Alerting takes place via 240 parallel ISDN lines
- The time required to alert all teams was reduced from six hours to three minutes
- (Alternative) Confirmations of notification help in resource planning
- Spontaneous telephone conferences
- Conference participants can be added after the conference has started
- Integration with the company's own systems via XML and VDS

Techniker Krankenkasse (TK) is a German national statutory health insurance provider (SHI) with over 6.3 million policyholders. With 215 branches and over 10,000 employees, it is among Germany's largest SHIs. A focus of the TK philosophy is to work day by day to maintain the trust of its policyholders. The company thus prioritizes flexibility and the personal commitment of its staff in its customer care. For example, the TK offers customer telephone support around the clock, 365 days a year.

All business processes in the company are now IT-based in some shape or form. Because of this, the topic of IT availability is a particularly critical issue in the TK's risk and business continuity management planning. The responsible representatives must maintain continuous unbroken functionality of their IT applications and services. Long restart times for IT and data loss would be unacceptable.

BASELINE POSITION AND CHALLENGE ::

Techniker Krankenkasse operates a structured emergency management system to minimize or eliminate damage to material objects, persons and image. The emergency response planning provides for core emergency staff plus three incident teams with 60 members. The tasks and responsibilities of the teams are documented in the IT-supported emergency plans. Regular continuity tests and alarm drills are conducted to practise all operation sequences.

But not even the best prepared companies can rule out the occurrence of unforeseen events. In an emergency, information must be exchanged rapidly and securely at all times and decisions must be made, even if the company's own IT systems and telecommunications are affected.

Minimizing restart times

In the event of an incident, the TK's business continuity management programme goes into action to restore core functions within only four hours. If an IT crash threatens to prevent business processes from resuming for longer than 48 hours, the company designates the situation as a crisis. Examples of classic threats are a computer centre crash, a virus attack on the TK website or other factors impairing production. In addition to the core IT applications, production systems at the print centre and the mail processing plant may also be affected. After all, the TK sends out over 27,000 letters to its customers every day.

Over-long alerting procedure

To minimize the IT startup time, a high-availability solution was installed. Now, if the computer centre crashes, processes are diverted to a second centre. Since the launch of this solution, however, the TK's old system of alerting its staff in an emergency proved to be unsuitable. The system, which involved telephoning lists of numbers in telephone chains, took up to 6.5 hours – longer than the target restart time of four hours for IT core applications.

SOLUTION ::

The TK drew up criteria and requirements as a basis for selecting a new emergency notification system. These criteria included operation that was independent of the company's own telephone system, alternative requests for confirmation and a variety of functions related to telephone conference management. After running a series of tests, the Techniker Krankenkasse decided on FACT24 Notification and Conferencing Service. „I would recommend FACT24 to everyone“, said TK's Business Continuity Manager Christian Senger. After testing the functioning of other alarm management systems, he declared FACT24 to be the leader in terms of value for money.



Easily able to cope

« At the TK, high availability of our IT is a key quality feature. In the event of an IT failure, even the alarm itself must help to minimize restart times. Manual alerting is far too time-consuming. Now we can alert our incident team in only three minutes thanks to FACT24, thus ensuring professional crisis management. »

Christian Senger,
Business Continuity Manager
of Techniker Krankenkasse (TK)

FACT24 integrated in four weeks

F24 AG's service was ready for operation after only four weeks. This speed was attributed by TK to the intuitive, user-friendly structure of the system plus the fact that no new hardware or software needed to be integrated. All that is required to use FACT24 is a computer with Internet connection and a telephone. This applies both to data management and to the activation of notification, alerts and telephone conferences.

REALIZATION ::

FACT24 significantly eased the workload of the security service at Techniker Krankenkasse. Now a single telephone call is all it takes to launch an alarm. Generally the first stage is to set up a telephone conference with the members of the emergency management team, to coordinate responses to the situation immediately. The TK uses all types of infrastructure available to alert the members of the emergency team, from telephones and fax machines to office and personal mobile phones.

When the emergency team is alerted, a process which takes place via 240 parallel ISDN lines, the alert message is accompanied by a request for confirmation. To confirm receipt of the alarm message, the team members use the telephone keypad to enter the number of minutes they will need to reach the scene. In the event of an incident the emergency team is informed of which staff will be available on site and when, by e-mail or fax or via the FACT24 Web interface.

Speed and high availability

FACT24 enabled the TK to make significant time savings compared to their earlier alarm management method (see diagram).

Phase	Action	Time for manual procedures	FACT24
Failure of computer centre	Security service alerts emergency management team (8 members)	30 min	3 min
	Set up telephone conference set up	-	3 min
Escalation	Alert emergency teams (54 members)	370 min	2 min
	Produce tamper-proof documentation	90 min	automatic
Total time		470 min	8 min

Diagram 1, Comparison of TK emergency organization

Now the 60-plus members of the emergency teams can be notified in only three minutes. In addition, FACT24 generates tamper-proof documentation of all initiated activities and confirmations immediately. Not only does the system save significant amounts of time; it also reduces the stress to which the emergency staff are subjected in a crisis. The TK also appreciated the high availability of FACT24 as a further mark of quality. All systems and processes involved in the notification process are based on redundant structures and guarantee availability of 99.98%.

PROSPECTS ::

The next action by TK will be to ensure greater technical integration of the system into the existing business management. The plan is to use FACT24 to notify the appropriate staff members in scenarios such as the failure of sub-elements in the technical equipment and installations or power supply failure.

In a crisis, communication with the emergency team and the key decision-makers plays a key role. One of the most important functions of a notification service is to support the exchange of information about the situation and the actions to be taken. In addition to saving significant amounts of time, FACT24 has also become a key information and communication portal for the TK's emergency management team.



We will be happy to supply further information on request:

www.f24.com

F-24 UK Ltd.
32 Threadneedle Street
London EC2R 8AY | United Kingdom
Phone: +44 (0)20 7763 6193
Fax: +44 (0)20 7763 6001
E-mail: office_uk@f24.com

F24 AG
Hackenstr. 7b
80331 Munich | Germany
Phone: +49 (0)89 23 23 638-0
Fax: +49 (0)89 23 23 638-6
E-mail: office@f24.com