Business challenge

To create a first-of-its-kind monitoring solution for one of Germany's largest power companies, Serima Consulting GmbH needed to work in a secure development environment running on a private cloud.

Transformation

In the midst of a national shift towards renewable energy sources, German utilities companies are poised to make significant investments in smart grid infrastructure. To meet the newly arising demand for monitoring smart grid metering networks, Serima created a first-of-its-kind offering in an IBM® Cloud™ Private environment, basing its solution on IBM Netcool® software.

Thomas Ellwanger
Senior Consultant
Serima Consulting
GmbH

Results

Creates a "lighthouse" solution
to guide smart grid projects throughout Germany

Engages customers
more effectively with sales demonstrations on the platform

Easily integrates
customer technology with an open-source framework

Serima Consulting GmbH
Develops smart grid monitoring for Germany's energy transformation

Established in 2003, Serima is an IBM Business Partner offering a broad portfolio of IT services, from solution development and implementation to maintenance and support. Maintaining headquarters in Hamburg, Germany and a second location in Switzerland, the company is one of the region's leading specialists in network management, monitoring and automation. Serima employs approximately 35 people and serves organizations across industries, including automotive, broadcasting, telecommunications, transportation and utilities companies.

"It was clear to us that we wanted to continue on our journey with IBM Cloud."

—Thomas Ellwanger, Senior Consultant, Serima Consulting GmbH

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Demand for new kind of monitoring

In Germany, a major energy transition—or "Energiewende"—is under way. With new regulations driving the national shift, the country's utilities companies will invest significantly in smartgrid implementation over the next decade, creating infrastructure to deliver electricity powered by renewable resources.

To initiate smart grid projects, utilities providers first need to deploy effective metering frameworks for capturing and communicating energy consumption information. As a network management and monitoring specialist, Serima is well positioned to support the effort.

"In a smart grid scenario, a utilities company managing an energy network is also suddenly managing a new communications network," says Thomas Ellwanger, Senior Consultant, Serima. "We've worked for years now with all of the big telecommunications companies and we have extensive knowledge and expertise in managing and monitoring those networks."

Working on a smart metering platform for one of Germany's largest power companies, a device manufacturer reached out to Serima for a network monitoring solution. To create an offering that would truly be the first of its kind, the IBM Business Partner needed to work in a security-rich development environment running on a private cloud.

Seamless development and delivery

Already hosting development and production workloads on IBM Cloud infrastructure, Serima wanted to develop its new monitoring solution in an IBM Cloud Private environment designed for flexibility and open-source integration.

"It was clear to us that we wanted to continue on our journey with IBM Cloud," says Ellwanger. "We had our development pipeline in place and were ready to run with ICP [IBM Cloud Private] as soon as it was available."

The IBM Cloud Private platform provided Serima with the robust security capabilities required for its project. "Serima is creating a market-leading offering and there's a lot of intellectual property involved," says Ingolf Hohensee, IBM Sales Leader for IBM Cloud Private. "With an ICP development environment, everything stays close in-house."

"Plus, open-source elements integrate seamlessly within ICP," he adds. "Instead of having to install different capabilities, Serima gets a complete bundle or developing applications."

Built on IBM Netcool Operations Insight technology running in the IBM Cloud Private environment, Serima's solution delivers high-performance alarm and event management functionality. "Netcool Operations Insight gives users a single viewpoint for seeing across an entire infrastructure," says Ellwanger. "And the IBM Netcool Agile Service Manager extension offers a more dynamic view to help quickly resolve any incident that occurs."

Additionally, the IBM Cloud Private platform's Kubernetes capabilities allow providers to easily manage multiple deployments of the offering. "With Kubernetes on ICP, it's just a mouse click to see what's going on across a complex environment," says Ellwanger. "You can see, for example, if a container shuts down and a new container starts up. You need past information to understand the issue, and Agile Service Manager shows you exactly what you need to know."

A "lighthouse project" to lead change

After a successful demonstration of the monitoring solution, Serima anticipates a launch with significant impact.

"Energy providers are on a journey to enable this technology and they're looking to each other to see who will come out with the first successful offering," says Ellwanger. "This may prove to be the 'lighthouse project'—the solution that will guide other providers in moving forward."

With Netcool software at the core of its offering, Serima can easily accommodate the anticipated demand. "We need performance and we need scalability, and this is exactly what we get from Netcool technology," says Ellwanger.

In addition to developing its new monitoring solution in an IBM Cloud Private environment, Serima relies on the cloud platform to deliver more effective sales demonstrations. "It's not enough to show a slideshow of pictures anymore," says Ellwanger. "You have to demonstrate in a live environment that you're capable of doing what you say you can. And now we can present a whole ICP story to our customers."

The IBM Cloud Private platform's openness and compatibility with a potential customer's existing infrastructure are invaluable for Serima in engaging in new projects. "With ICP, we're not stuck in some locked ecosystem," says Ellwanger. "If a customer wants to integrate its own tools or graphics or data, it's a piece of cake. This is only possible with an open platform like ICP to build on."

Solution component

- IBM® Cloud™ Private
- IBM Netcool® Agile Service Manager
- IBM Netcool Operations Insight

Take the next step

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