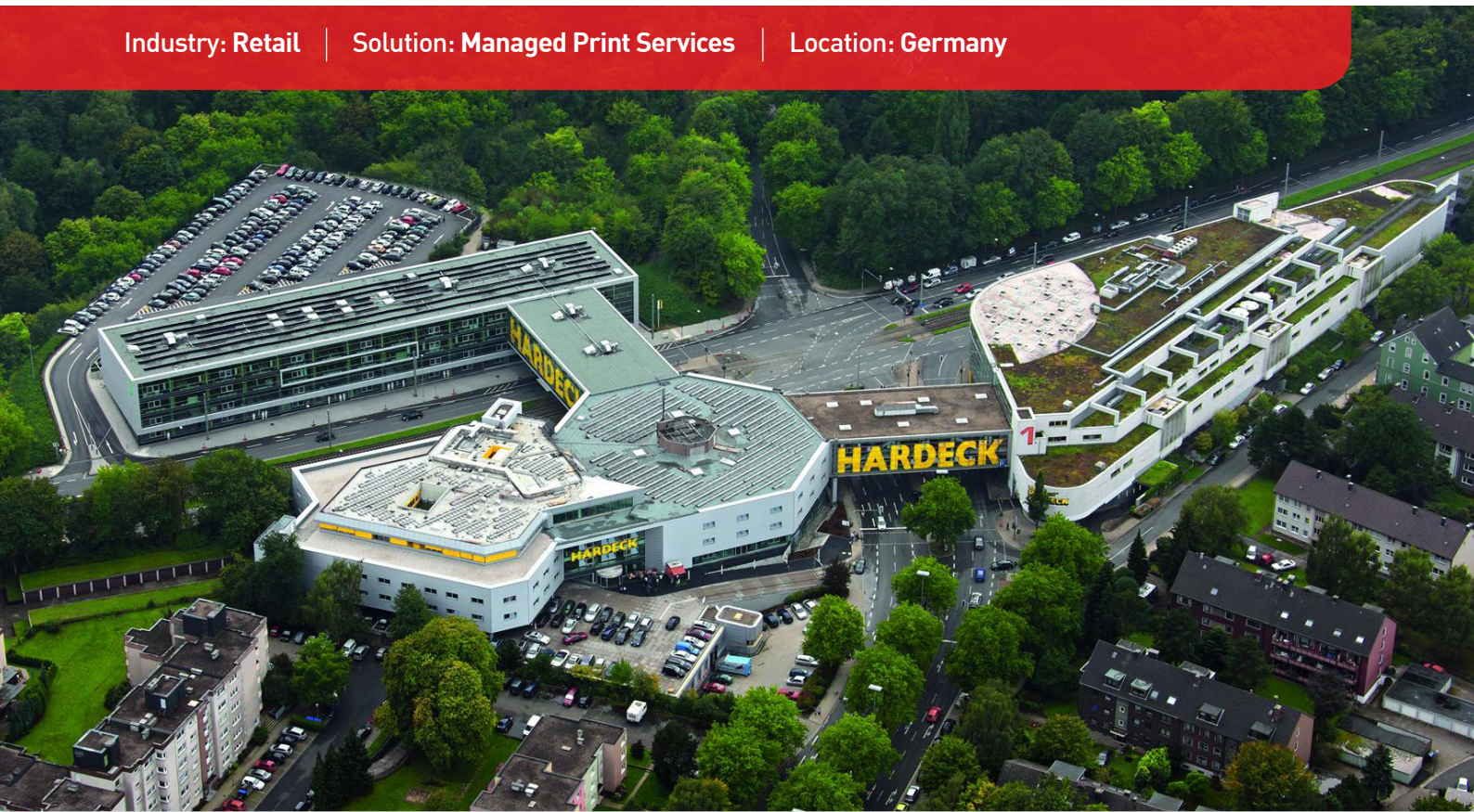


OKI Case Study

Industry: Retail | Solution: Managed Print Services | Location: Germany



OKI provides Managed Print Services to furniture retailer HARDECK

HARDECK

The Challenge

For many years, HARDECK was known as a conventional furniture retailer with the offshoot store HARDI in Bochum, aimed at young adults. Initially, the company's IT team, managed by Joachim Barthel, handled all of its IT work and services in-house, including device replacement, new purchases and support. The company began expanding in 2014 with the opening of two additional branches in Senden, close to Münster and Bramsche (Lower Saxony), along with an additional branch in Hilden, close to Düsseldorf, which officially opened in summer 2015.

This sudden growth presented a number of new challenges to the IT department. The new stores continued to use their own IT systems and equipment, while the number of employees relying on HARDECK's in-house IT services saw a sharp increase.

About the Customer

Founded in Bochum, Germany in 1937, HARDECK is a family-owned retail furniture business currently in its fourth generation. The company culture is centred on tradition and experience, with a focus on taking an innovative, dynamic and sustainable approach to business. For example, HARDECK's store in Bochum is Europe's first ever zero-energy furniture store. The company currently employs around 1,400 staff across six furniture stores in four different locations in Germany. The stores are located in North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony and total 160,000 square metres of retail space.

PRINTER FLEET
DEPLOYED
WITH MORE THAN

500
devices



HARDECK, Hilden branch

As a result, the IT team was spending an increasing amount of time resolving issues across the new chain.

“It was clear to me that we needed a good concept that would allow us to quickly standardise the very different IT landscapes,” explains Barthel. “The focus needed to be on taking the right approach in replacing old equipment in the stores that had been acquired. My team was also in urgent need of external support in order to ensure the implementation was successful. Ultimately, we wanted to create a cost-effective, transparent and easy-to-use printing infrastructure.”

One particular challenge faced by HARDECK was that it required a software solution. The company uses thin clients that can be administered remotely, as a reliable, cost-effective and energy-saving alternative to PCs. The printers used in the customer service workstations in HARDECK stores are controlled via these thin clients and are therefore connected by USB and not present on the network. This meant that the IP addresses of the printers could not be selected, though this would prove to be crucial for the contractual implementation of a flat-rate printing package.

The Solution

Sinell EDV Zubehör GmbH, an IT systems company with headquarters in Monheim am Rhein, has worked with HARDECK as an IT service partner for many years. In collaboration with Sinell, the furniture retailer conducted a comprehensive review to analyse its diverse print infrastructure. Following this process, an initial concept was drafted, providing the same systems, service lines, consumable materials and applications across all locations. Barthel made inquiries with several providers, eventually deciding to partner with OKI.

The solution would comprise of a complete replacement of all the company’s legacy systems, which had come from various suppliers, with the OKI Executive Series of printers, along with the implementation of OKI’s Managed Print Services (MPS).

HARDECK and the management team were initially impressed by the OKI Executive Series’ strong price-performance ratio. It also helped that HARDECK staff were already familiar with the OKI brand, as the company was already using a number of OKI products, such as its LED and dot-matrix printers, which Barthel described as “high-quality devices with a very long service life.”

“The positive experiences in the past, the in-depth consultations and the impressive price-performance ratio ultimately tipped the balance in favour of OKI.”

Joachim Barthel, IT Manager, HARDECK

Benefits at a glance:

- Greater reliability with high quality and robust OKI products
- Improved efficiencies with easy operation of devices
- Increased visibility of printing costs and usage

“Our positive experiences with OKI in the past, the in-depth consultations and the impressive price-performance ratio ultimately tipped the balance in favour of OKI,” says Barthel.

HARDECK had commissioned an external analysis, which was conducted by OKI and Sinell, in order to determine the specific requirements across the company. The first group to be taken into consideration was the individual salespeople in the retail stores. The company decided to provide each advisor with a printer, rather than providing a few central printers, so that advisors would never have to abandon a customer before the contract had been signed. The second analysis was of the marketing department at the Bochum headquarters, who produce a number of documents including graphic print formats for the point-of-sale. Considerably more powerful OKI devices were chosen for the marketing department, as these devices would be better suited to the high print volumes and professional quality required to produce marketing material.

On completion of the project, not only did the furniture stores have new, standardised equipment, but the Bochum headquarters also benefitted from significant investment in improved IT equipment.

Today, HARDECK uses more than 500 OKI devices as part of its MPS programme. OKI is able to respond with flexibility to changing customer requirements. Additional devices follow a simple process, which allow them to be incorporated into the existing contract.

A solution was also designed for the thin clients. Together with OKI software experts, the thin client manufacturer in Japan programmed tailored drivers for HARDECK's solution. Throughout the entire process, the international cooperation received was very positive. “Things progressed a little slower than I would have liked,” recalls Barthel, “but this was so that different countries and hierarchical structures could be involved, and overall it went very well. We were very impressed with how willing OKI was to respond to our specific needs”. After four months of programming, including a test phase, a working driver was ready and Sinell initiated the roll out.

“Throughout the entire process, the collaboration with OKI was very good, especially the advice they provided us with,” says Dirk Fischer, Project Manager at Sinell. “The implementation of the project, including the software development, test phase and step-by-step rollout of the devices in the individual furniture stores took a year to complete and each step went very smoothly.”

“We were very impressed with how willing OKI was to respond to our specific customer needs”.

Joachim Barthel, IT Manager, HARDECK



HARDECK store bridge in Bochum

The Benefits

The end result was a solution tailored to the very specific and changing needs of the company, with a standardised service concept and a high level of service performance.

Work processes have been optimised, internal processes have been simplified and costs have been greatly reduced.

The response from HARDECK staff to the new IT equipment has been very positive as well. As the technology is reliable, staff are able to focus on their work, resulting in a substantial boost in productivity. The printers are intuitive and uniform throughout each branch, ensuring ease-of-use.

Standardising the devices has also significantly simplified tasks for the internal help desk and first-level support provided by Barthel's team.

“Our IT resources are once again free to be used for more demanding work that needs to be completed. Even our finance department has recognised the increased transparency in printing time and costs as clear signs of progress” says Barthel.

The Future

The replacement of devices and continuous optimisation of the current solution are now part of normal, everyday office management. Regular meetings take place between HARDECK, Sinell and OKI, with contact even between meetings to ensure that everything is always running smoothly. “Our cooperation is very successful and really fun,” says Fischer, describing the situation. The three partners all share an optimistic view of their cooperation, especially since HARDECK has plans to continue expanding in the future.

OKI's Smart Managed Print Services programme encompasses a range of tried and tested methods and tools to establish the current state of an organisation's print related costs and processes before OKI creates a professional bespoke proposal to suit individual customer specific requirements. Our sales and engineering staff work closely with our key partners to offer Managed Print Services with maximum customer value.

www.oki.com/eu



twitter.com/OKI_Europe_Ltd



linkedin.com/company/oki-europe-ltd



youtube.com/okieurope1