Background information

The SFS Group is a global market leader for mechanical fastening systems and precision formed components. With activities ranging from design and production to customer sales and support, information flows in a variety of formats, including text, spreadsheet, database, graphics, and more. Headquartered in Heerbrugg, Switzerland, the SFS group has more than 70 sales and production sites in Europe, North America and Asia. The focus on the needs of its customers has shaped the SFS culture since 1928. The company adapts its own solutions to help boost its customers' competitiveness and generate added value. Now it was time to further enhance its own competitiveness and efficiency in terms of information access and management.

A Value-Driven Approach to File Management

While the company's core technologies are tightly focused, it serves diversified end markets, including the aerospace, automotive, construction, electrical/electronics, and medical compo-nents industries. In Switzerland, folders and files stored on the company's central data store now had to be distributed on portable PCs and other mobile computing devices (tablets and phones) for personnel in the field. The company's criteria for selecting a solution and a provider for managing these data and files were based on its own set of five values: SFS wanted a vendor that understood the concept of partnership, commitment, respect for its community of users, successful outcomes, and positive change.

Challenges

SFS had a checklist of file management features and functionalities that had to be available in the solution it chose. The file management, syncing and sharing application had to exist in a format running inside the infrastructure of SFS, for total control of the company's data. Installation on SFS server resources had to be flexible and simple. The solution had to offer anywhere-access from iOS devices (iPhones and iPads), Android devices, Windows machines, and more. Advanced sharing functionality was also part of the "bill of materials" for building the perfect solution, handling public, private and temporary file shares without a hitch, and offering granular file download controls. In parallel, the interface for administrators had to offer simple, but powerful controls for the administration of accounts, users, mobile devices, and storage limits.

The Solution

SFS field staff can now access folders and files on the company's central data store, via laptops, tablets and mobile phones. Users connected to the company's secure Intranet can access the FileCloud server directly. SFS IT staff were not only impressed by the richness of the feature set of the FileCloud solution, but also delighted by the quality of FileCloud support. These two qualities led to speedy and successful deployment. Role-based download controls allow the company to determine precisely what an internal user may access, compared to an external business partner.

Wide-ranging Flexibility in File Formats

An immediate benefit to SFS and its users is the ability to view file types that may not be supported natively on the user's device. OpenOffice integration with FileCloud, a standard feature of the FileCloud solution, allows users to view common text, spreadsheet, and presentation formats, as well as standard PDF files, all within the web browser of their device. Teams of users working on projects can receive file permissions on a group basis for files, folders, and shares, too. Existing network folder shares can be made accessible from anywhere by simply re-using current NTFS permissions and Active Directory user profiles.

FileCloud and the Future for SFS

As SFS develops its business, its IT model may change as well. Cloud computing is attractive for many reasons, including financial ones, and file management solutions should take this into account as well. Fortunately, FileCloud offers great flexibility in the types of storage that can be used. From local solutions including hard disk drives and network area storage (NAS/SAN), FileCloud also supports the use of cloud object-based storage such as Amazon S3, Azure, and OpenStack. Increased usage of FileCloud will be easy for administrators to handle as well. The powerful FileCloud administration portal facilitates and accelerates deployment and management of thousands of users with millions of files. Custom workflow capabilities, policies, and parameter configurations give fine-grained administration possibilities as needed.

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> *Our field staff can easily access files on the company servers from anywhere.*
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> Frank, Infrastructure Engineer