



Case Study

Metro France

Avocent facilitates remote access to the servers of METRO France

“Avocent KVM switches offer a high degree of versatility and ease of integration, making them particularly attractive. The result is fewer cables in the server room, and no need for dedicated consoles, which saves our staff time and space,”

*Systems Administrator,
Christian Rippe.*

Context

An undisputed leader in the “Cash & Carry” trade, the METRO company, which originated in Germany, has been established in France since 1971. With its 8000 employees, METRO France supplies an assortment of complete product lines to independent retailers, with an annual turnover of 3 billion Euros. At its headquarters in Nanterre, the IT department provides centralised management for the main information systems of METRO’s 75 warehouses located throughout France.

METRO requires an information system that offers a high level of stability and security. Maintenance operations must be completed as quickly as possible and access to servers is of the utmost importance to ensure efficient operation.

METRO’s nerve centre – the server room

METRO’s information system, installed at the company headquarters, is split into two areas. The mainframe, dedicated to METRO’s “strategic” applications, such as procurement management and dedicated tasks involving logistics operations, is installed on one side of the room. On the other side are the servers for METRO’s client/server applications. This relatively sizable installed base is administered by a dynamic team, including Systems Administrator, Christian Rippe, who was responsible for the re-engineering project for the computer room, which includes 60 servers operating under a mixed Unix and NT environment

More than 80 applications are managed in this room, which serves as a true nerve centre for the company. Sales force software intended for sales managers, management’s decision-making tools, accounting applications, budgetary control software, and all of METRO’s office resources are available from user workstations, depending on the user profile assigned to each individual. Communication tools (e-mail, Internet), Oracle databases, the backup operations performed by the operations staff and even schedule management (for the 35 hour work week), all benefit from the centralised support provided by the server base.

While working on a project to ensure compliance with standards, the IT team recently decided to re-engineer the computer rooms, with one of their main concerns being cable reduction. The objective was to re-think the deployment of server racks to decrease the number of cables, which were creating too much clutter. Christian Rippe wondered whether there was a package that would allow systems consoles to be consulted on a remote basis – the entire set-up using standard category 5 cables and a switch that would facilitate access to connected servers from the same console, via a remote interface.

“As the project developed, I acquired a fairly precise idea of the equipment I needed. I discovered Avocent while searching for a solution on the Internet. Their switches were exactly what I was looking for,” Christian Rippe stated.

Avocent KVM: An original solution

The Avocent KVM solution turned out to be the best technology to deal with the issues at hand. After testing the equipment proposed by Avocent, the team of network administrators chose to deploy four DSR4160 switches for the NT servers and a CPS1610 switch for the UNIX servers.



Case Study

Metro France

Avocent facilitates remote access to the servers of METRO France

The solution selected by the IT team is original and highly effective in terms of reducing cabling. A rack is completely dedicated to the Avocent switches, which are linked to a Nortel Ethernet switch that receives all of the server connections. Each DSR4160 provides access via a KVM switch to 16 servers using category 5 cable to 100 Mbs Ethernet with a RJ45 connection, enabling four users to be connected simultaneously. Thanks to its DSRIQ CAT5 cable, the installation becomes much less complex, since the amount of cables on the rack is considerably reduced. A CPS1610 switch, dedicated to the UNIX servers, was added to the solution to provide servers and other computer room equipment with a complete range of KVM connections.

This compact design is perfectly suited to high-density computing environments such as the server rooms at METRO. By implementing the DSR4160 and CPS1610 solutions, METRO France can now control all of its servers via a single interface, by using DSView software, and this is possible from any location. DSView uses TCP/IP connections to troubleshoot or, if necessary, reboot servers from one workstation. This innovation results in a more efficient use of workspace. The time saved has proved extremely valuable to network administrators, who often need to access all servers as quickly as possible. This versatility, which provides the option of creating user profiles, is particularly attractive. Thanks to Avocent's DSAAuth software, security requirements are also supported. These specifications were perfectly suited to the needs expressed by the IT team at METRO France.

"Avocent KVM switches offer a high degree of versatility and ease of integration, making them particularly attractive. Integrating the Avocent switching solution was made even easier by using our existing equipment, based on market standards (RJ45/CAT5 cables). The result is fewer cables in the server room, and no need for dedicated consoles, which saves our staff time and space," Systems Administrator, Christian Rippe, is pleased to report.

Outlook for the future

METRO's IT team are so satisfied with the KVM solution for its server room that they are planning to re-engineer their back-up room, which is located at just a short distance from the server room, during the next six months. Using the same approach, the objective is to eliminate manual analogue switches and to deploy DSR4160 switches, all networked together via an Ethernet connection. After being won over by the Avocent solution, the entire computing team at METRO are delighted at this prospect.

avocent international ltd.

avocent house | shannon free zone | shannon | co. clare | ireland
tel. +353 61 471 877 | fax. +353 61 471 871 | email. info-europe@avocent.com
www.avocent.com