



Saarland University

Saarland University implemented Novell® Identity Manager to centralise and standardise the administration of its 25,000 users, providing a single point of control across four distinct environments and dozens of systems. The Novell solution has enhanced the resilience of the network, reduced administrative workload and improved security.

Overview

Founded in 1948, Saarland University is a dual-campus university located in Saarbrücken—the capital of the German Federal State of Saarland—and in Homburg. The university has 15,000 students and more than 2,000 staff, and offers degree programmes in law, economics, medicine, humanities, natural sciences and technology.

Challenge

Saarland University has a very diverse IT infrastructure supporting some 25,000 users, with numerous different systems for administrative, educational and research purposes running on a wide variety of operating systems. The fragmented and distributed architecture meant that there were a number of different systems for managing user accounts, with very little consistency between them. Users needed to remember multiple usernames and passwords to access applications, and the high frequency of forgotten passwords was a significant drain on IT helpdesk and support resources.

The lack of a single user management solution was also causing availability problems, because each distinct environment was effectively a single point of failure. If one sub-section of the infrastructure were to fail, its user management component could

not be delivered by another part of the infrastructure, limiting overall resilience and occasionally leaving users unable to access vital services.

Saarland University aimed to create a central point of control for managing users of its heterogeneous infrastructure, both to simplify administration and to improve accessibility.

Solution

The University selected Novell Identity Manager as the best option for managing all 25,000 users on its network. The Novell solution synchronises with several smaller user management and domain controller systems, including a Microsoft* Windows* Active Directory* Server with 7,000 users, as well as its student information system and SAP* HR system.

“Novell Identity Manager offered the highest performance of the solutions we considered, with the added advantage of excellent integration with other systems,” said Michael Thoenes, System Architect at Saarland University. “We have a very heterogeneous landscape, with more than 10,000 devices running four distinct operating systems, so the interoperability of the Novell solution is crucial.”

Saarland University at a glance:

State university in Germany

■ Industry:

Education

■ Location:

Germany

■ Solutions:

Novell Identity Manager

Novell Open Workgroup Suite

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server

■ Results:

- Reduced password-related helpdesk calls significantly
- Standardised rules for password management
- Improved resilience of network services

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System Architect

Saarland University



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Before the deployment of Novell Identity Manager, users had to follow many different sets of rules for creating and revising their passwords, depending on what systems they were using.

“One of our key goals for the solution was to standardise the rules governing the creation and updating of passwords,” said Thoenes. “Novell Identity Manager enabled us to apply the same standards across all platforms, and to significantly reduce the number of passwords that a typical user has to remember.”

Saarland University runs a number of network services and applications—including Novell GroupWise—on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, and is steadily migrating its SGI IRIX and Sun Solaris systems to Linux. The University also recently implemented Novell Open Workgroup Suite with SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop for 1,500 users, providing a high-performance working environment at lower cost than proprietary options.

Results

With a single central access and password control solution in Novell Identity Manager, Saarland University has simplified the management of its diverse infrastructure and made it more resilient. There are no longer access problems caused by the failure of identity management systems, and users require much less support.

“By simplifying and automating password management with Novell Identity Manager, we have reduced the chances of users forgetting their passwords,” said Thoenes. “Support requests to the helpdesk have fallen perceptibly. It is also much easier to maintain our users from a single point of control, which reduces the amount of routine administration that our skilled staff have to do.”

The Novell solution has also improved security and reduced the administrative workload by making it easier for the University’s IT staff to set up and rescind user access rights. When a student or staff member leaves the University, the IT team can quickly remove their access rights in Novell Identity Manager, which then automatically cascades the change across all the relevant systems and applications.

“Our Novell identity management solution is absolutely reliable, and a failure in one part of the network no longer means any loss of access for users,” said Thoenes. “The Novell solution provides vital services which are not limited to the computing environment, but which also improve our payment and swipe-cards system, so we really benefit from the higher level of reliability.”



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