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Jörg Zießow
IT Manager Central Europe

National Instruments is relying on the iPatch® Intelligent Infrastructure Solution from CommScope at its new site in Munich, Germany

Summary: National Instruments (NI) provides market-leading industrial hardware and software solutions for measurement, testing, control, monitoring and embedded applications. Based in Austin, Texas, the company was founded in 1976 and now supplies more than 30,000 businesses all over the world. It employs in excess of 5,200 people in 40 countries.

Working with its Alliance Partners, NI supports customers in areas from application development and implementation to project management and system integration. From testing the latest mobile phones to producing ground breaking medical devices, NI customers develop innovative technologies that benefit millions of people.

The company offers a broad range of services including training and certification programs and, together, these make exacting demands on infrastructure at NI sites worldwide. So, it made sense for the company, as part of a relocation of its Munich office, to create a future-oriented work environment to fully meet the challenges of the digital age.

The company had rented out part of one floor of an office building in Sendling, Munich in 1992 to accommodate 50 employees. As this was no longer big enough for the increasing demands of the German branch, a decision was made to move into new offices. The main aim was to provide a modern building with a future-proof infrastructure for 140 employees and accommodation for a fast growing customer education department.

Connectivity for Every Application

Planning began as soon as appropriate new premises had been found at the Media Factory in Schwantalerhöhe, Munich. These were perfect in terms of architecture, modernity and facilities.

The first step was to define requirements for IT infrastructure in the new building. These started with structured cabling with Category 6 and Category 7 connections for data, and Category 3 for telephony. A fiber backbone was specified to connect communications rooms on each floor together with serial digital communication for access to terminals/time registration.

Locations for the communications rooms, which were constrained by the structure of the building, presented a particular challenge. To connect with these, some of the cable lengths needed to be over 100 meters long.

“We also had to connect up the new customer training center, which was more than 100 meters away in a different building on the same campus,” explains Engineer Jörg Zießow, IT Manager Central Europe, who was responsible for the implementation of the entire project.

Complex Requirements

Before issuing the invitation to tender, the field was narrowed down to a few serious contenders who were the only ones in a position to fulfil the complex requirements. Positive experience at the NI sales office in Budapest, where a SYSTIMAX solution from CommScope had been implemented a few years earlier, helped in the decision-making.

“CommScope had the overall package of innovative data center and cabling products to guarantee us a high level of reliability, flexibility and security. And another reason to opt for CommScope was its BusinessPartner, NetLink Datenkommunikationssysteme, a certified, established regional partner, who implemented the project,” explains Jörg Zießow.

Co-operation with Unterföhring-based NetLink (www.netlink.mun.de) proved very productive for NI throughout the project. Not only were they constantly working through optimizations with NI’s business managers and its project management team, they also coordinated the installation with other site contractors throughout the building phase. This meant that all installation work ran smoothly.

The new Munich Media Factory facility has around 5500 square meters of space across seven storeys in the main building and in the two-storey customer training center. Over 50 km of CommScope GigaSPEED XL copper cabling connects the communications rooms on the different floors with around 2000 connection modules, most of which are in floor boxes.

The entire installation was carried out with CommScope solutions including the iPatch intelligent infrastructure solution. This is a comprehensive, fully compatible system that makes documentation, administration and monitoring of network infrastructure easier, giving an overview of changes to the network in real time.

Cutting Costs with the iPatch Solution

The iPatch System Manager software correlates this view with information from network devices, IP terminals and other systems. At the same time, it can also access and provide information on assigning devices at the network level to the physical transfer level. This combination of hardware and software - of visibility and knowledge - offers a whole new level of control. The real-time overview of the infrastructure that it gives to managers enables them to document, plan and implement changes without incurring great expense.

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"LED displays on the patch panels guide the patching process so it takes less time. Also, the option of having the current connections available for real-time documentation at any time is particularly attractive - and I like the system's reporting features, which allow estimating of future port requirements."

In the next few years, National Instruments is planning further expansion in Germany, which will involve renting additional office space on the Munich Media Factory site. "This will involve extending the existing IT infrastructure with CommScope components that complement the existing installation.

Commenting Andreas Kaufmann, Technical Manager, CommScope said: "We are looking forward to a continued close partnership with National Instruments. With the infrastructure they have now, they can expand their network seamlessly as their business grows."



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