The products of the Mammut Sports Group, which is synonymous with innovation, quality and reliability in the alpine sports and outdoor sector, are in considerable demand all around the world. Following the company’s growth and expansion into new markets, its existing IT network was reaching the limits of its capacity. For Felix Kündig, CFO of the Mammut Sports Group, and Michael Kocher, Head of Information Technology, this was a reason to act. A new, secure SD-WAN now provides the necessary security, performance, flexibility and efficiency at all of the company’s global locations.

«Today, you can no longer separate network operations and security.»

Felix Kündig, Chief Financial Officer
Michael Kocher, Head of Information Technology
Mammut Sports Group
Mr. Küündig, as CFO of the Mammut Sports Group you are also responsible for IT. Is IT a cost factor or a business driver for you?

Felix Küündig: IT is definitely a business driver. Mammut has a high affinity for technology – you can sense it in our products, in the way we work as a company and also in our communication with our dialog groups. Even though I am a financial specialist by profession, I still know that IT is a key strategic factor in our success.

Mr. Kocher, you manage global IT operations and, together with your team, are responsible for ensuring that everything runs smoothly. The words of your boss must be music to your ears...

Michael Kocher: Certainly. Of course it’s fantastic when the work you do has such a big influence on the company’s success, but it is also a great responsibility. The underlying conditions for business IT have changed considerably in recent years. Complexity levels have risen enormously and the expectations – both from the business and from our colleagues – are extremely high.

«With the SD-WAN and the security services from Open Systems, we have created an excellent basis from which to pursue flexible growth. I am confident that we are extremely well equipped to handle whatever the future may bring.»

Felix Küündig, CFO

Which business areas are most dependent on IT at Mammut?

F. K.: At our company, there is barely a single process which is not dependent on IT. That is true for the whole organization, starting with production. We are a member of the Fair Wear Foundation and make approximately 35 percent of our products in Europe and 65 percent in the Far East, particularly in China and Vietnam. We also operate large logistics centers in Germany and the US. Then there is the digitization of our sales channels. Our online shop is developing into an extremely important source of revenue. Finally, of course, there is the marketing and the dialog with our community, which is conducted primarily via digital media nowadays.
You have completely reorganized your global network. What was the reason for that?

F. K.: There were various reasons why we wanted to – or in our view had to – take those steps. Mammut is part of the Conzzeta Group. In contrast to the other Group companies, we are a business-to-consumer organization and one that is greatly driven by marketing. Our strong growth and the associated global expansion led to a situation in which our old WAN solution was no longer consistent with our business model. It became more and more difficult to meet the needs of the business. We lacked transparency, control and bandwidth, which made the introduction of new applications, for instance in the area of unified communications, practically impossible.

M. K.: We had set ourselves the goal of being able to operate more efficiently, quickly and flexibly in the global market. It was not so much about technology. For us, it was more of a matter of principle, a conceptual issue. The people in charge within the Group understood this and were very supportive in many respects. Naturally we were aware of the fact that the Group would not compromise when it came to security and compliance.

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Felix Küngig, CFO

Which solution did you specifically envisage?

F. K.: We wanted an all-in-one solution, a kind of all-inclusive package. With the resources we have, it is no longer possible to set up and secure a global network and then operate it around the clock. The level of complexity is much too high for that.

M. K.: Our motto is, «Either do it right, or don’t do it at all.» With that in mind, we wanted to find a partner who possessed the necessary expertise and had control over both the technology and the processes. This would give our internal specialists the opportunity to put more focus on the needs of the business.
What is your current setup and what advantages does it have over the old solution?

M. K.: Today we work with Open Systems and use their SD-WAN, which includes security services from a single source, 24x7 operations and security monitoring.

We are currently present at eleven sites in Switzerland, Germany, Norway, the UK, Japan, South Korea, China and the US. The basis of the service is an SD-WAN with hybrid technology which connects these sites. At present, we still operate two MPLS lines, one to the parent company in Zurich and one to the logistics warehouse at our German subsidiary, from where we supply the whole of the European market. The remaining sites are connected via site-to-site VPN. Application performance management gives us the critical visibility and control down to the application level. Thanks to this service component, we can reserve certain bandwidths for business-critical applications and automatically route applications dynamically depending on the status of the WAN.

The use of internet technology greatly increases our flexibility. What is more, we get five times more bandwidth at a lower cost. A further factor is that we now have secure access to the internet at every site via what are known as local breakouts. This takes the pressure off our WAN and at the same time gives users faster access to the internet and the cloud. Across the whole WAN we have a centrally managed security layer that protects all of our assets, be they on premises, at a data center or in the cloud.

The entire service is operated 24x7 by Open Systems security engineers. This really takes a tremendous amount of pressure off us. We are only involved in exceptional situations and can focus on defining and monitoring the rules. To do this, we work really intensively with the portal, which gives us the transparency we need to have a clear overview at all times and to be ready to provide information.

«I am convinced that we will need to pay more attention to the topic of security in the future. Even the best perimeter protection will not prevent infiltrators from getting into the network and proliferating there.»

Michael Kocher, Head of Information Technology
F. K.: If you analyze precisely all the things that are included in the service, you'll see that it is definitely excellent value for money, in my opinion. The great advantage of this kind of service is that it can be planned and budgeted for so easily. We can count on paying a fixed price, regardless of how many interactions we have with the security engineers in our day-to-day work. And since we also do not have to take care of hardware and software updates, the technology risk is completely eliminated.

«We had set ourselves the goal of being able to operate more efficiently, quickly and flexibly in the global market. It was not so much about technology. For us, it was more of a matter of principle, a conceptual issue.»

Michael Kocher, Head of Information Technology

What convinced you that Open Systems was the right partner?

F. K.: This solution was already my favorite after the first presentation. It was immediately apparent that these people knew what they were talking about. The solution is comprehensive and combines SD-WAN and security in a unique way.

M. K.: Another key factor in the decision was certainly the fact that Technical Account Management was already at the table in the tender phase. It was important to have a very precise description from the outset of what specific things the service would have to do. This transparency, coupled with Open Systems’ aforementioned expertise, gave us confidence and created a basis of trust at an early stage.

F. K.: This trust was then reinforced by the numerous testimonials we were given. Open Systems’ list of customers is impressive. We met up with a number of them and were able to talk to them «off the record», i.e. without any representatives of Open Systems being present. After that, it was clear to us that if the system worked for these companies and organizations, it would also work for us.
In 1862, Kaspar Tanner opened a rope factory in Dintikon in the Swiss canton of Aargau, thus laying the foundations for what is now the Mammut Sports Group, one of the world’s most cutting-edge and innovative companies specializing in the development and sale of alpine sports and outdoor equipment. The Mammut Sports Group, which has been part of the global Conzzeta Group since 1982, now employs a workforce of 718 at its headquarters in Switzerland and its subsidiaries in Germany, Norway, the UK, Japan, South Korea, China and the US. Thanks to its global distribution network, the Mammut Sports Group generates some 80 percent of its revenue outside Switzerland. Around 65 percent of the company’s revenue comes from clothing, but climbing ropes – of which Mammut is probably the most renowned provider on the market – remain a vital segment. The company is also highly innovative when it comes to marketing. With www.mammut.ch and #project360, Mammut has been opening up the third dimension of digital alpine cartography since 2014 and enabling viewers to experience at first hand the thrills of famous mountains all around the world on their computer or smartphone screens.

www.mammut.ch  project360.mammut.ch
The migration is complete and day-to-day operations have begun. How is the cooperation working out from your perspective?

**F. K.:** We are very satisfied. In my view, the current solution cannot be compared with the previous one. They really are two different worlds, even for me as a non-IT specialist. One thing I have noticed in particular is that the team is able to answer questions from management much faster and in far more depth. My colleagues often show me something in the Mission Control Portal. The portal displays everything in a very transparent and understandable way, so you can find the information you want at a glance. That was not possible in the past.

**M. K.:** The Mission Control Portal is really very good. The information is well organized and up to date at all times. Something we, of course, appreciate very much is that it looks «sexy» and is extremely easy to use. That’s a very important attribute in my view, as we spend a lot of time in the portal. In addition, the portal makes it easy for us to supply management and business with the most important key figures, which could be anything from a global overview to information about the applications.

What happens behind the scenes is equally impressive. The reaction time of the Mission Control organization is unparalleled. My team is extremely happy, and our parent company has also reacted positively to the new solution. All rules are implemented painstakingly and precisely by the security engineers, and all actions and changes are clear and easy to understand.

«If you analyze precisely all the things that are included in the service, you’ll see that it is definitely excellent value for money, in my opinion.»

Felix Kündig, CFO

You had a very tight schedule for the migration. Did everything go according to plan?

**F. K.:** Mostly. In fact, we were so well prepared that we were able to complete the project in just two months. At one point there were some difficulties with the data line part, which turned out to be more work than expected. Luckily, we were able to enlist the support of the Open Systems Connectivity Services Team at short notice.
What was the problem exactly?

**M. K.**: We simply underestimated the complexity of making the multiprovider concept a reality. At first we had the feeling that we could do it ourselves, but then we realized at an early stage that we would not be able to stick to the timetable without support. Once the Connectivity Services engineers were on board, the process happened almost of its own accord. They knew exactly which strings had to be pulled at the ISPs. Now that the initial work is complete, we have taken over responsibility for provider management again. The flexibility is enormous. If the bandwidth has to be adjusted on one of the lines or the quality is no longer right for a provider, we can modify the setup very easily.

We were under pressure because we had to replace the existing contracts at the end of the year. Completing a migration of this kind in just two months is an outstanding achievement.

Once the contracts were signed, we started work on the installation in early September 2016. The sites were then migrated in November. We were ready in plenty of time and even had time to conduct extensive tests before commencing with the new setup as planned at the start of 2017.

**Just one question about security: how do you think this issue will develop in the future?**

**M. K.**: I am convinced that we will need to pay more attention to the topic of security in the future. Even the best perimeter protection will not prevent infiltrators from getting into the network and proliferating there. For this reason, we need to go to the source of the threat and contemplate solutions such as Network Security Monitoring.

Today, you can no longer separate network operations and security. We therefore need to consider the issue of security from a much more holistic perspective. And in the future, application owners will also need to give greater thought to the topic of security.

**F. K.**: With the SD-WAN and the security services from Open Systems, we have created an excellent basis from which to pursue flexible growth in line with our requirements. I am confident that we are extremely well equipped to handle whatever the future may bring.