



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Innovative remote maintenance: BERNER IT connects the virtual and the real world**

**The Berner Group is now using mixed and augmented reality for the remote maintenance of its company-wide IT systems. Thanks to the innovative technology, the speed and efficiency of troubleshooting, installations or routine maintenance work are increased many times over. In addition, the costs arising from a possible standstill of – depending on the use case – around 4.000 euros per minute on average can be reduced to a minimum in the future. At the start of the project, the B2B wholesale company is initially using six new Microsoft HoloLens glasses and the remote support software "TeamViewer Pilot".**

"The switch from manual on-site activities to remote support is another important step on the way to fully networked, international collaboration and helps to make the best possible use of human resources in the area of remote maintenance. The team in the responsible Server & Network department can now concentrate much more on its key competencies as an innovator and driving force for digitalisation," says Heinz Bruhn, Director IT Infrastructure & Collaboration Solutions at BERNER.

The Server & Network department supports BERNER locations in more than 20 European countries. Thanks to their extensive know-how, the experienced experts often only need a few minutes to identify a technical problem and, for example, replace defective server components or carry out a programme installation. In the past, however, travel was usually much more time-consuming. "In the past, car journeys lasting hours were not uncommon," reports Heinz Bruhn. "Staff spent tens of thousands of kilometres on the road every year to clear up faults of this kind."

The Corona crisis led to an additional challenge. "For us, the global pandemic means: we have to manage the balancing act of maintaining services for the international business units on the one hand, but at the same time, of course, above all, we have to fulfil our duty of care and protect the health of our employees," explains Heinz Bruhn. "This accelerated our decision to introduce the innovative technology."

#### **Intuitive and easy to understand**

With the new "HoloLens" mixed reality glasses from Microsoft, specially trained IT staff at BERNER subsidiaries can now carry out work assignments at their respective company headquarters under expert guidance from the head office in Künzelsau or Cologne – in real time and across different national borders. The glasses, which are fully integrated into Microsoft Office 365, use the Remote Assist software for this purpose, which Microsoft Teams integrates into the glasses. Overlays such as live arrows, videos or technical documentation are displayed directly in the field of vision. "After an extensive test phase, the selected glasses were by far the most comfortable and surprisingly pleasant to wear. Continuous use of up to two hours is therefore no problem," emphasises Heinz Bruhn. "The existing integration into the familiar Microsoft environment also makes the training intuitive and easy to understand."

#### **Remote support via smartphone app**

In addition to Künzelsau and Cologne, the six new devices will initially be distributed to the BERNER locations in Kerkrade (Netherlands) (BENELUX region headquarters and European central and import warehouse), Saint-Julien-du-Sault (France) and Braunau am Inn (Austria). However, all other BERNER locations can also use the modern technology for maintenance work together with Group IT from now on, as they are supported with the "TeamViewer Pilot" app. The software expands the classic remote support with augmented reality. With a live video from the smartphone camera of the person responsible on site, arrows can be placed, text annotations added or even drawings attached to real objects.



### **Flexible, efficient and fast amortisation**

"The introduction of the HoloLens glasses and the TeamViewer Pilot App once again underline the successful pioneering role of our group in the digital transformation," emphasises Peter Spitzlbauer. The CFO did not miss the opportunity to test the technology himself in several use cases. His conclusion: "Fascinating. The software gives us the opportunity to work much more flexibly and efficiently. It also takes our Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery concept to an even higher level. As an omni-channel distribution company, we depend on a functioning IT infrastructure and maximum availability of our business processes – here we cannot and do not want to afford any major failures! It is already clear that with the help of this new solution in incident management, we will revolutionise international cooperation by massively reducing the costs for possible downtimes and by cutting travel time alone by up to 70%. The investment will thus have paid for itself very quickly, which of course makes a CFO particularly happy."

### **Die Berner Group**

The Berner Group is a family-run European commercial enterprise. Our vision is: "We keep the world together and moving." This means we are the central B2B trading partner for all materials in the maintenance, repair, and production segments for our customers in the building, mobility, and industry sectors. With more than four channels we create an integrated omni-channel purchasing experience for our customers. In the steel and C materials as well as chemicals segments we are also an innovative manufacturer. We are represented in over 23 countries for our customers with more than 200,000 items and 8,200 employees.