CUSTOMER STORY

Photowatt

It is essential for the photovoltaic manufacturer to maintain seamless operations in their factory. Photowatt relies on Icinga to monitor a plenty of systems and networks, ensuring continuous performance.

Historical pioneer in the solar industry for 40 years, this French EDF Group subsidiary is a leader in the low-carbon production of high-efficiency bricks, wafers, and photovoltaic panels.

They are the last ones in Europe to master the entire photovoltaic manufacturing process, from silicon smelting to module assembly.

Photowatt®

Photowatt operates under the EDF Renewables group, a subsidiary of the EDF group, which is a global leader in the field of electricity. The French EDF group holds the top position in Europe as the largest producer of new and renewable energies, boasting an impressive installed power capacity of 28.3 GW. The EDF group has 38.9 million customer sites around the world with a turnover of 71 billion Euros achieved thanks to more than 160,000 employees.

The Challenge

Photowatt has developed unique know-how over 40 years which has enabled it to acquire deep expertise and become a key player in the sector. Made up of "Crystal Advanced" monolike cells, their very low-carbon photovoltaic panels guarantee reliability and high-level performance.

Today, Photowatt operates on a hyperconverged infrastructure with VMware's vSAN, and also hybrid solutions with Microsoft 365 and Azure. They have two computer rooms, each containing a vSAN node with backup for their critical machines stored in Azure using Veeam solution. Additionally, they have some virtual machines running in Azure.

Avoiding Production Downtime

Photowatt follows a continuous 3×8 schedule, ensuring uninterrupted factory operations. Maintaining resilient infrastructure is imperative as any disruptions could lead to production downtime. Consequently, being proactive in addressing issues is vital.

In 2017, Icinga was introduced to replace a Nagios system, which necessitated daily administration by someone proficient in Linux. The primary goal was to facilitate user-friendly administration for the entire team. After thorough research, the team identified Icinga as the ideal solution, offering a swift migration process, simplified administration and additional advanced features.

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> ## Icinga in 3 words? Flexibility, Power, Accessibility.
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> Béranger Ricotou
> System and Network Expert
> Photowatt, EDF Group

The Solution

Transition from Nagios went like a Breeze

The transition was incredibly smooth and effortless as they were able to use most of their plug-ins and integrate their existing hosts and services.

At Photowatt, the team is happy with the flexibility of Icinga, which enables highly detailed monitoring tailored to their specific needs. The Plugins seamlessly integrated with minimal development work, and the built-in administration interface of Icinga Web 2 required no extra adjustments. Additionally, they appreciated the option to integrate NagVis and connect it with Grafana.

The Icinga installation oversees all aspects of their IT system, encompassing physical and virtual components such as APC UPS, Windows/Linux servers, HP/Cisco/Aruba switches, Aruba WiFi APs, Ascom phone APs, Mittel Autocom, internet access (SD-WAN VMware), surveillance cameras, web services, SQL databases, and various other elements.

User-friendly and Easy Administration

The team enjoys working with Icinga and sees as crucial advantage the simplicity of the tool, all the while offering many advanced features.

Icinga provides clear visibility of current alerts and enables proactive response to alarms. They also appreciate that the community is very active, and numerous plugins are available for everyone, which is of great importance.

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It's important that the product is accessible to everyone and doesn't necessarily require specific knowledge.

Béranger Ricotou
System and Network Expert
Photowatt, EDF Group

Success

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> Icinga has proven its worth, and we rely on it completely. We have saved time thanks to Icinga, simplifying our operations.
>
> Béranger Ricotou
> System and Network Expert
> Photowatt, EDF Group

The biggest achievement of the transition is that accessibility has greatly improved. Easy access to monitoring for the entire IT system is essential. Béranger tells "We are a small team, and it's important that everyone feels comfortable with Icinga." The team has been able to eliminate maintenance tasks that used to take up their time, such as analyzing disk space and monitoring internet bandwidth consumption.

On a daily basis, the entire team has a client (Nagstamon) on their workstation that provides them with real-time visibility of alerts. They also have a display screen in the office that constantly shows NagVis maps, allowing them to respond promptly to issues and resolve them before a total outage. Béranger is very satisfied that several times, they have been able to prevent costly production shutdown thanks to Icinga.

The solar energy sector in Europe is facing a challenging period. Fortunately, positive changes are underway due to initiatives by the European Union, although the progress is still in its early stages.

This said, Icinga will continue to be a central pillar of Photowatt's infrastructure. Through their collaboration with a new integrator, the French Icinga Partner Easter-eggs in Paris, the team is currently enhancing their Icinga set up.

About Icinga

Icinga is a comprehensive open source monitoring solution that integrates easily in existing infrastructures and is unbeatable in configuration possibilities, automation and scaling. Monitor private, public, or hybrid clouds. For more information, visit icinga.com

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