

CUSTOMER STORY

Clear Channel

In Europe, Clear Channel Sweden counts on Icinga to ensure that each one of their digital displays is always up and working.

Today, as technology is changing the way people behave and consume media, outdoor advertising seems the only stable platform for brands for impacting target audiences with powerful communication. It means a lot more than posters and in fact it's not only outdoor but often indoors,

for example in shopping malls and in the subway. As a world leading Out of Home media company, Clear Channel is reaching millions of people with a diverse portfolio of 450,000 print and digital displays across Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America.



Clear Channel Sweden is a part of Clear Channel Outdoor Holdings, Inc. (NYSE: CCO) – one of the world's largest outdoor advertising companies and active in 31 countries. Clear Channel in Scandinavia has about 210 employees, approximately 160 of whom are in Sweden.

The Challenge



Black screens are bad.

Roar Amundsen
NOC Lead – CCI Tech Europe
Clear Channel International

The company runs around 17.000 digital panels in 17 European countries from Norway to Italy. These panels are at the core of Clear Channel business, so it is of vital importance to ensure that they are always in perfect working order.

Roar Amundsen, NOC Lead at Clear Channel International explains the task: “If you look at a single product it is fairly basic – It’s a screen, a network component, a monitoring board and a computer with software on it that receives and plays material and reports back. The complexity comes from the number of panels with different setups, in different environments and that they are spread out across Europe.” And when one goes down, they need to react instantaneously – understand what it is, try to fix it remotely, or if not possible, send someone there to do it.

Solve Issues Before They Become Problems

“Black screens are bad” says Roar, meaning that his company not only loses money but reputation when panels are down. Therefore, they need to make 100% sure to detect and react to issues very quickly – before an incidence becomes a big problem and clients are unhappy.

The Clear Channel European monitoring team based in Sweden and Norway currently inspects around 4.300 digital panels with Icinga. Although in a few other countries the panels are still managed and monitored by various subcontractors, the plan is to centralize and standardize monitoring using Icinga.

The Challenge

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The flexibility of Icinga in terms of what it can monitor was decisive.

Roar Amundsen
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Coping with diverse environment

The IT-environment at Clear Channel is disperse and heterogeneous because initially there were fifteen autonomous business units who made their own choices. There was no corporate standard, resulting in an extremely diverse hard and software of the panels.

The company migrated from Nagios to Icinga some six years ago, when their digital panel business grew bigger and bigger, and they needed to get a more professional approach to monitoring. With the help of experienced Icinga partner **Binero** (at that time still named Opsdis) the whole migration process went without a hitch.

In a next step, the company decided two years ago to bring all IT together and have one European organization serving all countries. Roar points out that “Aligning the organization and standardizing what we are using has been quite a journey and Icinga has been a very helpful part in that. We started with Icinga in the Scandinavian countries but as we merged into one organization, we evaluated and chose to use Icinga for the network of all digital panels in all countries. The flexibility of Icinga in terms of what it can monitor was decisive for that.”



The Solution

At Clear Channel, Icinga monitors connectivity of the boards, scheduling and content of the layout system and a variety of sensors like temperature, light, humidity – or if the board door is open. Icinga collects all these metrics and reports incidences via a ticketing system.

Altogether Clear Channel is monitoring 4.300 panels with around 10.000 hosts.

Leveraging Apply-Rules and Parent-Child Hierarchies

An initial problem was that an environment like this produced many false positives. This generated many tickets in their ticketing system. To remedy this, they made use of Icinga's convenient apply rules. Now, when a monitored host or service comes back after some time without someone touching it in the ticketing system, Icinga itself closes the ticket. Roar asserts that "Being able to create this rule was a big relief for the team and this solved between 80-90% of the tickets automatically."

The company is very aware of the complexity of such a network of unattended devices in public environments and Roar explains "We need to find the sweet spot between notification and state thresholds making the most use of Icinga's customized template setup. We aim to enhance the granularity and accuracy of our monitoring data, empowering us to derive deeper insights and make more informed decisions regarding our operational strategies."

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With Icinga we really appreciate the parent-host thing and that it's agnostic.

Roar Amundsen
NOC Lead – CCI Tech Europe
Clear Channel International

The Solution

Another important advantage of Icinga for their particular use case is the possibility of establishing parent-child dependencies. It's a big benefit that "if the router in an airport goes down, you don't get tickets from 100 monitored boards with each time 8 services. But just one from the router."

Clear Channel operates Icinga in a high availability set-up with 2 Icinga master servers on AWS. In addition, there are 2 satellite servers, one that acts with active checks and one with passive checks for panels which are not on their network.

Help from Icinga Partner

The cooperation with Swedish Icinga partner Binero remains very helpful and they still like to involve them when they encounter issues or need to do something bigger. For instance, some time ago, they performed a reinstallation of everything: "We cleaned up our installation because we had experimented with various configurations and monitored extensively. Additionally, we migrated it to the cloud," explains Roar.



Success



Icinga in a nutshell? Gives us control!

Roar Amundsen
NOC Lead – CCI Tech Europe
Clear Channel International

Reliability and Peace of Mind

Since the upgrade and migration to Icinga, the Clear Channel team enjoys much greater peace of mind.

However, there was a recent incident with Icinga where certificates suddenly stopped working, leading to numerous unknown hosts.

Reflecting on this, Roar emphasizes, “It’s in moments like this when you realize how dependent you are on the system. We had no idea what the situation was out there – what’s down, what’s up. We felt very blind when we didn’t have it.”

Looking ahead, Clear Channel’s monitoring team in Europe is focused on their next project: Integrating all 17 European countries into their preferred monitoring system, Icinga. This expansion aims to enhance their control by broadening their visibility and leveraging Icinga for predictive purposes.

Clear Channel acknowledges the critical role of Icinga, stating, “Without Icinga, we would quickly encounter significant challenges.”

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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