



Grenke AG

SD-WAN for financial service providers

Client Success Story





FINDING FREEDOM AND FLEXIBILITY IN A NEW SD-WAN NETWORK

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Has there ever been an IT project without surprises? I seriously doubt it. And if you're answering no, chances are you haven't been in the business long enough. But that's not to say these obstacles are impassable or unfixable. A solid partner with excellent solutions will ensure your project progresses, regardless of the inevitable IT surprises.

For the past five years, I've worked as Team Leader for IT Client Infrastructure Management at GRENKE digital. GRENKE digital is the supportive IT branch of GRENKE AG, a German financing partner that offers leasing, banking, and invoice factoring. My job is to support every employee at GRENKE, which tops 1,900 people in 33 countries. GRENKE's employees are our clients, and our five-person IT team manages the preparation, installation, and support of all their international local infrastructure — PCs, printers, servers, network racks, and so on. If a GRENKE employee needs help with their infrastructure, we take care of it, of course with the support of the 120 IT colleagues in first-level support, data center, network, messaging, software development, and deployment.

Another part of my job is listening to and implementing feedback. There are a lot of significant challenges that go along with global IT infrastructure, compounded even further as GRENKE grows. And while the support business always comes with fielding pain points, there was one complaint in particular echoed by hundreds of employees: our slow branch network.

The Bottleneck of Our Global MPLS WAN

GRENKE relied on MPLS WAN for years, but it began to hold us back. In conversations with colleagues, many came to the same conclusion: "It just doesn't work." Remote workers have told us that their household internet connections were faster than what they could find in the office, while others could make a cup of coffee in the time it took to open an application. And the distance between each of our global locations didn't help.

Our system was too slow, too costly, and had far too few configurations, which prevented us from adjusting connections on a granular level. These problems were evident at the end of every month as our sales teams hustled to input contracts, double-check figures, and submit fiscal reports. We are a sales-driven organization, and the slow-moving network was a constant barrier to processing sales quickly and fluently. It slowed our pipeline and frustrated our employees. It was bad for IT and bad for business.



My team worked with the network and security teams to analyze the facts. We evaluated needs and impediments with the stakeholders and users in the international company and concluded:

- GRENKE's network speed was low.
- The load time was unacceptable.
- The flexibility was virtually nonexistent.

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A modern business needs flexibility, speed, reliability, and cost efficiency to expand sustainably.

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Our current provider charged astronomical prices for legacy MPLS WAN, and the installation time and cost to increase our speed would strain our budget. We finally concluded that a traditional WAN network was no longer the solution. A modern business needs flexibility, speed, reliability, and cost efficiency to expand sustainably, and the difference between commercial success and failure often lies with the technology a company selects. GRENKE decided to move to SD-WAN to become more agile and cost efficient, and we started a market analysis for SD-WAN providers that would fit our entrepreneurial spirit.

We Needed SD-WAN to Increase Our Agility

SD-WAN offers an array of options when configuring an internet connection. You can combine several data lines and customize connections to match user needs. This customization would provide us with outstanding flexibility in every global location, saving us time, money, and effort by only using what we need at each office.

Another big plus was the ability to shape and set rules for traffic. With SD-WAN, we could separate traffic into different categories and priorities, which would help us avoid those end-of-month slowdowns that were characteristic of our existing setup.

Once we had decided that SD-WAN was the way to go, our consulting company connected us with several providers offering different SD-WAN migration packages. We compared several organizations based on price, features, and team spirit, and we could tell Riedel was the team for the job. Riedel had worldwide network experience in multiple countries and employed highly-skilled technicians at their service center in Germany, eliminating time and language barriers for support. They offered managed services, and the “set and forget” philosophy appealed to us. From the start, Riedel and GRENKE saw eye to eye on the project, and they offered us a dedicated technician to walk us through our deployment. We were on our way—but as I mentioned earlier, surprises lurk around every corner.



Supply Chain Disruptions Threatened to Upend Our Plans

Adapting to our wide range of locations and office sizes, GRENKE outlined the best and most cost-efficient migration plan with multiple equipment classifications: platinum, gold, silver, bronze, and copper. Our primary location in Baden was handled first and treated to the platinum plan (the most extensive setup), while we gave smaller or more distant locations a lower classification and prioritized them according to their speed of delivery. Some countries' providers took up to eight weeks to complete installation, while others (like those in Germany) took four weeks or fewer.

Deployment officially began in 2021, and supply chain disruption from the pandemic created a chip shortage for our Cisco SD-WAN equipment. Our order sat behind millions of other backorders, and we had no idea when it would be fulfilled. We had to adjust the order of our location migration based on the availability of the necessary equipment. Our larger locations with more SD-WAN components and intricate configurations were looking at a delay of six months or more.

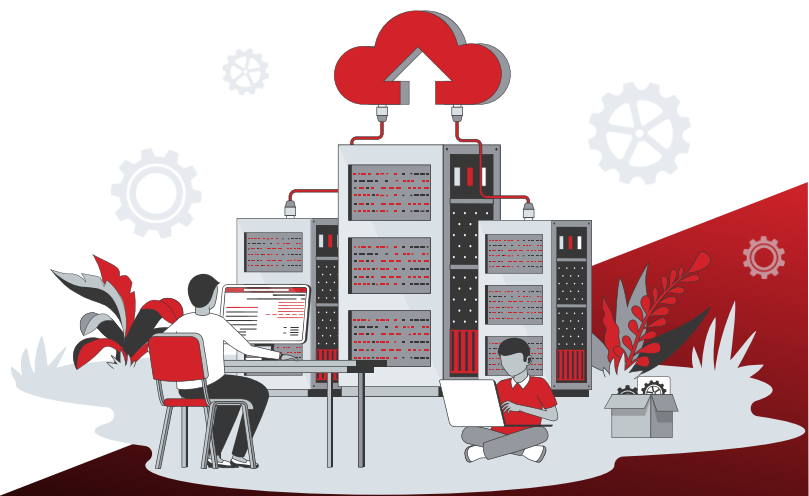
But Riedel didn't come to us with the problem; they came to us with a solution. They offered the use of secondhand equipment they already had in stock as an interim solution—a placeholder until our requested equipment came from Cisco. We could stay on track without waiting for the supply chain delays to resolve. We accepted their recommendation, and everything continued according to their established timeline. By September 2022, we saw 90% project completion.

Realizing the Benefits of SD-WAN

The benefits we've seen from SD-WAN are monumental. In just one year, we've already saved 25% in costs compared to our previous infrastructure. We can also configure our global network based on the needs of each location, which results in faster connection for everyone. There's no need to throw money for equipment at a site that doesn't need it, and with the adaptability offered by Riedel's SD-WAN, we can easily scale up or down depending on location size.

SD-WAN has also granted my team the gift of time. Since Riedel manages our network monitoring and configuration, GRENKE digital can focus on our sales business rather than fret about our system. The freedom of choice and flexibility of a good solution is worth its weight in gold.

Riedel's calm professionalism has transformed how GRENKE operates from the inside out. Our teams can move faster, and so can IT. I know I can rely on Riedel for everything, and my team and I feel overwhelming relief that we have their support.



Partners Who Share the Same Spirit

I chalk a lot of this success up to the spirit of Riedel. GRENKE is a family-founded company at heart, and even as we've grown internationally and have been listed at the stock exchange, we've strived to retain that feeling and add a personalized touch to everything we do. We could tell from the beginning that Riedel felt the same way, and ran their business similarly. We have all appreciated the personal element of Riedel's partnership, and having direct lines of communication means that technical issues get solved quickly.

Our technicians have a direct line of communication with Riedel's German offices, and we feel their dedication and commitment to quality at every level. From their leadership teams to their skilled technicians, everyone goes out of their way to treat us and our concerns with respect. If you've ever worked in IT and know what it's like to get trapped on the support desk "merry-go-round," you know how invaluable personalized assistance can be. And despite our equipment surprises and an entirely remote rollout during the height of the pandemic, our connection with Riedel ensured a smooth process. I've come to trust their knowledge and commitment to excellence with everything.

When we met with the team in person for the first time at the end of the migration, I could see that our gut feelings were right. Whether in technical discussions, in wrapping up deal negotiations, or in sharing a good story around the dinner table, everyone was the same person they had been on the phone and the screen.

That authenticity matters, and is the basis of a strong partnership. If you're looking for a partner to navigate the highs and lows of IT, go with your gut.

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Align your passions, look for a matching spirit, and follow your nose to find authenticity. Or I can save you some time and point you to Riedel.



Get in Touch

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About RIEDEL Networks

RIEDEL Networks is a privately held, global network provider focused on tailored networks. We are listed in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Network Services, Global, as a niche provider specializing in mid-market international enterprises and the media and events sector. With our own global backbone, we help companies be connected worldwide. Our services include internet connectivity, MPLS, SD-WAN, SASE, Cloud Connect and much more. Our customers come from a variety of industries and value quality, security and reliability. RIEDEL Networks is a 100% company of the RIEDEL Communications Group in Wuppertal, Germany, and is fully privately owned by Thomas Riedel.