



CASE STUDY | Parallels Desktop for Mac **Business Edition**

POOLgroup makes the most of Windows Programs without using Windows PCs

The Company

It all started with Westfalen Sound, a sound system company launched in 1978 and soon counting world-famous acts like Rod Stewart and Supertramp among their clients. Eventually, this organisation went on to become Europe's largest and most successful event production enterprise. In 1986, Westfalen Sound for the first time assumed blanket responsibility for a major event. After that, the company formed additional business units enabling it to offer all the relevant event services as a one-stop shop. In 2009, all of those business units were assembled under the umbrella of POOLgroup. Today, POOLgroup specializes in planning and producing major events for clients from all areas of business, industry, politics, and society, as well as the show and entertainment business, and can look back on more than 30,000 successful events worldwide. The company has five offices across Germany and its headquarters are located in Emsdetten in the area of Westphalia. That is where the majority of its staff of 150 is based, many of them having been with the company for many years. One of those is Harry Schuler, having worked as a system administrator since 1994, ensuring that the organisation's backend always was latest state-of-the-art technology with minimal downtime.

The Initial Situation

The computer machinery of the electrical engineering graduate, who, in his spare time, contributes his deep end to a number of groups with his electric bass, includes some 200 endpoint devices, around 60 of which can be rented for events. The systems used by the employees are, in their majority, current model MacBooks, with a number of iMacs thrown in. Harry cares for setting up these systems in person while administration in the course of day-to-day operations is done locally as far as user's skills allow for it. The predominantly used applications include the office programs Apple supplies by default, as well as Final Cut, the Adobe Creative Suite, and a range of recording solutions. At POOLgroup, a consistent Apple environment does its job to the satisfaction of all concerned. However, a number of special applications had the effect that some windows into the Windows world had to be opened as well. The ERP system used in the back office, for one, is only available as a Windows version; a number of Microsoft Excel applications along with some database connectivity will only work smoothly on Windows and, last but not least, Mac users could not access public Outlook folders under certain circumstances. A possible solution for this problem could of course have been to provide the affected users with PCs. But this would not only have meant a significantly increased administration workload for Harry but would also have caused considerable discontent on the part of those users.

The Solution

Another alternative to purchasing some PCs would have been utilizing Boot Camp, a utility pre-installed on recent Macs turning them into dual boot systems: By pressing a select key, users can choose either to run macOS or to start Windows, if installed, at each system boot or reboot. This was not an option for Harry, however, the reason being that the reboot needed for every operating system switch would certainly have had an overly detrimental effect on both the productivity and the nerves of the back-office staff. A Web search then produced a promising solution that seemed neither to imply buying additional hardware nor to come with any impact on productivity or high deployment or training overhead: The Parallels Desktop Business Edition. A trial version that Harry downloaded free of charge and tested thoroughly performed to his satisfaction, so he first provided five back office staff members with the new solution.

The Results

ERP solution users are highly valued specialists in their field but only in the rarest of cases seasoned IT pundits as well. Deploying Parallels Desktop Business Edition went smoothly, and the solution proved to be plain sailing in daily operations with no additional support overhead as well, showing that Harry had made the right initial decision. He was fully convinced of the merits of Parallels Desktop Business Edition now and decided to purchase a volume license for 50 seats and today this is in operation at POOLgroup in its most recent release 14. When asked what this virtualisation solution's most relevant features are for himself and for the users, he discriminates: "For me as an admin, key features of a new solution are that it integrates perfectly into the existing infrastructure, it is easy to set up and roll out, it doesn't entail any support overhead, and it comes with efficiency benefits that help pay for the purchase price in a short time. All this is true for Parallels Desktop Business Edition. And the Coherence-Mode is clearly the star feature for users, where Windows and macOS cooperate so seamlessly that they might be parts of one single operating system. Windows and Mac applications appear on the desktop together and documents from both worlds can be stored in the same folders. This allows users to work in a completely intuitive way and the underlying technology simply disappears in the background."

Harry is also enthusiastic about another of Parallels Desktop's features that generally goes unnoticed by his users: the total ease with which virtual machines (VMs) can be generated and moved about. "I can move single Parallels virtual machines as well as complete VM storage locations to external drives quite easily if I'm, say, planning to roll them out to multiple Macs. I really can't think how much more convenient scaling up an environment once created can get!" So it doesn't come as a big surprise that Harry's verdict concerning purchase and deployment of this solution turns out to be highly positive: "The Parallels Desktop Business Edition saves money for our company, for me as an admin it saves a great deal of time, and it saves the nerves of users who would long have lost them with cumbersome switching between operating systems. I can only recommend Parallels Desktop."

The Challenge

With activities spanning the world, POOLgroup was looking for a solution to use their ERP system, which was only available on Windows, and a couple of custom applications more comfortably without having to add PC hardware to their Mac infrastructure.

Solution at a Glance

The Parallels Desktop Business Edition proved to be a perfect combination of easy deployment and user friendliness. Users can switch between operating systems on the fly without the need to reboot, enabling them to continue their work intuitively without interruption.

Key Results

- Uncomplicated deployment and fail-proof operation
- Virtual machines easily generated and moved
- Operating systems switched on the fly
- Content moved between macOS and Windows using copy and paste
- IT infrastructure kept consistent
- Fast payback on purchase costs
- Professional 24/7 customer support for an unlimited time span