

CASE STUDY

Strengthening Cyber Defense and Security Awareness: The Birkenfeld District's Success Story with KnowBe4

The **Birkenfeld National Park District** in Rhineland-Palatinate is intensifying its efforts to improve cybersecurity. More than 200 of the district's employees now regularly undergo security awareness training provided by the KnowBe4 platform. This enables the district administration to train its workforce as a human firewall and to strengthen its defenses against the ever-increasing amount of cyber threats.

Public Administrations – The Focus Of Cybercriminals

A cyber attack that targeted another German district administration in October 2022 led to the shutdown of all administrative computers and telephones for almost six months. All of the older computers had to be completely disposed of due to the risk of malware that still existed. The costs were an estimated €1.7 million (\$1.8 million), and thousands of citizens were affected by the complete shutdown of the administration.

No district wants to experience such an attack, yet the threat level remains extremely high, and security structures often struggle to keep up with sophisticated threat scenarios. These realities demonstrated to Birkenfeld County the urgency of implementing effective training programs to educate people on the current dangers of cybercrime.

The variety of training content, the simulated phishing tests and the platform's comprehensive analysis and customization options convinced Birkenfeld to put their trust in KnowBe4.

Selection and Implementation Of KnowBe4 With The Support Of Partner "save IT first"

After carefully examining various providers, the Birkenfeld district administration ultimately decided in favor of the KnowBe4 platform. The variety of training content, the simulated phishing tests and the platform's comprehensive

Birkenfeld National Park District

Industry

Government, District

Headquarters

Birkenfeld, Germany

Challenge

The need to provide employees with an effective security awareness training program

Success by the Numbers

- Reduction in the percentage of users who failed simulated phishing tests (Phish-prone™ Percentage) from an initial 15.7% to 3% in less than one year
- Training completion rates consistently above 95%
- Security awareness training program up and running in less than one month

analysis and customization options convinced them to put their trust in KnowBe4. In addition to Birkenfeld district administrative management, only the chairwoman of the staff council was involved in the selection process.

The automation within the KnowBe4 platform made it possible to easily distribute training sessions to employees while simultaneously reducing the time required by IT staff.

Responsibility for implementing the KnowBe4 platform fell to the district's digitalization department, which relied on the expertise of [save IT first](#), a specialist in IT security concepts and KnowBe4 partner in Germany. The implementation took place in August 2022, and the first simulated phishing test was conducted in September 2022. The simulated phishing test caught some employees, but regular training sessions and exercises helped them to better identify potentially dangerous messages.

A total of 208 users are currently participating in KnowBe4's training campaigns, and they all have completed various training sessions. After the basic simulated phishing test, a monthly phishing campaign was launched to assess employee knowledge and provide additional training. This was later changed to a quarterly campaign frequency to better track progress over time and prevent the simulated phishing tests from becoming too routine. The success of this strategy can be seen in the improvement in the error rate, which has dropped from an initial 15.7% to just 3% in less than a year.

The Most Important Successes Of The Birkenfeld District With The KnowBe4 Platform

Security awareness training enabled the Birkenfeld District Administration to significantly strengthen its internal security architecture.

Employees were intensively educated about the dangers and pitfalls of modern cybercrime, which led to a significant reduction in their susceptibility to phishing attacks. The automation within the KnowBe4 platform made it possible to easily distribute training sessions to employees while simultaneously reducing the time required by IT staff. The district's employees also appreciated KnowBe4's friendly and helpful customer service.

The ability to conduct local USB tests convinced decision makers that the program would be successful. The engaging training videos and the simulated phishing tests are particularly noteworthy because they provide hands-on experience for employees. The high level of employee acceptance is reflected in the completion rates of the various training sessions, which are consistently above 95 percent. The program has enabled employees to quickly identify and proactively combat potential cyberattacks.

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Next Steps For Birkenfeld and KnowBe4: Reducing Costs and Saving Resources

The district of Birkenfeld intends to further expand the KnowBe4 security awareness training program. One important initiative is the introduction of the [Phish Alert Button](#) (PAB) for easier reporting of suspicious emails in order to further increase acceptance among employees and reduce the workload on IT support. The PAB provides Birkenfeld employees with a secure way to forward email threats to the security team for analysis and delete the suspicious email from the user's inbox in order to prevent future threats.

KnowBe4's training program also plays an important role in implementing the requirements of the BSI Baseline Protection Profile, which provides guidance to local authorities on how to proactively defend against a wide range of cyber threats.

The Birkenfeld District Council also aims to increase efficiency by using both new and existing computer hardware to save energy and reduce costs for the administration and the citizens. KnowBe4 is an important component of this sustainable security strategy. Thanks to the KnowBe4 platform, employees can be trained on the specific requirements and risks of cyber defense, even when working from home.

The district plans to present its successes with the KnowBe4 platform to the Rhineland-Palatinate working group of municipal umbrella organizations in order to share the knowledge and information gained with all public administrations. The Birkenfeld district administration actively recommends KnowBe4 to other municipalities as it is fully convinced of the value of KnowBe4's security awareness and simulated phishing platform and customer service.

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Birkenfeld County Council has seen a significant improvement in security practices and increased cybersecurity awareness throughout the organization because of its partnership with KnowBe4. With great confidence, the district can now use the knowledge gained to defend against sophisticated cyber attacks on a daily basis and to continuously protect its organization.