



Akibia escapes cycle of server rebuilds with AppSense



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Marty Stenius
IT Operations Manager



INTRODUCTION

Akibia is an IT solutions company operating out of the USA and Europe, providing outsourced hardware and software support to businesses worldwide. Akibia's employees support customers ranging from Fortune 1000 companies to small and medium-sized firms spanning a wide variety of industry verticals including financial services, technology, telecommunications, manufacturing and consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, healthcare and higher education.

Akibia helps its customers to optimize, secure, manage and support their mission-critical IT infrastructure and improve the availability and performance of their data centers.

BACKGROUND CHALLENGES

Akibia's IT department comprises just five staff members on two continents running two help desks as well as taking responsibility for all server management, desktop delivery, and telecoms services. To optimize the support this team can provide, Akibia has for many years published applications from a Windows® Terminal Services™ environment, managing all applications centrally in Massachusetts and delivering them to the desktops of employees across 14 offices.

Along with standard Microsoft Office™ applications and Microsoft Business Dynamics™, Akibia runs its core CRM application Clarify within the Windows Terminal Services environment. Akibia saves operating costs by supporting the application

in-house, and still used the Windows '95 version of Clarify. Everything ran fine while Akibia was using Windows '95 servers, but upon upgrading to Windows 2000, problems began.

Marty Stenius, IT Operations Manager at Akibia explains;

“When we moved our CRM application onto Windows 2000 Terminal Services we had to dramatically relax security on the server in order for it to run. The problem was exacerbated when we upgraded again to Windows 2003 Server. In order to make the application run, we could no longer lock the server down at all.”

With an unlocked server, Akibia's IT department quickly entered a systems management nightmare, as Stenius comments;

“Running with reduced security was simply awful. Because the Terminal Server environment appears just like a desktop, our users were constantly forgetting any software they downloaded was running on the server rather than on their desktop. The servers quickly filled up with rogue applications such as instant messenger clients, toolbars and other junk, and my team was constantly rebuilding the servers to clear them up.”

At one point Stenius' team was rebuilding one of their Terminal Servers every three to four weeks - an onerous task at four hours each time. With the move to Windows 2003 approaching and Akibia adding an additional five servers to their environment, Stenius knew the time had come to seek a proper solution to the server management problems.

Challenge

- > Lock down server for improved security and management
- > Remove constant requirement to rebuild servers

Solution

- > AppSense Management Suite

Benefits

- > Zero server rebuilds in six months of use
- > Improved logon times
- > Clear visibility of server capacity use

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THE INTRODUCTION OF APPSENSE

Stenius turned to the AppSense for a solution to the constant rebuild requirements.

Akibia purchased the AppSense Management Suite and immediately switched on AppSense Application Manager. AppSense Application Manager enables the IT department to define role-based access rights to applications, as well as setting parameters based on location, firewall settings and even time of access. With restrictions on all software downloads and preventing unauthorized applications from executing, the nightmare of server rebuilds stopped overnight.

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With the initial driver for installing AppSense under control, Stenius is now looking to the other components of the AppSense Management Suite to understand the benefits they offer Akibia.

Alongside Application Manager, the AppSense Management Suite comprises Performance Manager and Environment Manager. AppSense Performance Manager optimizes application and user environments to ensure maximum hardware utilization with an optimal, consistent quality of service.

AppSense Environment Manager takes all the user's settings and manages that information independent from the desktop. When a user accesses their desktop session on any device, information about that user is streamed to the desktop on-demand. The user sees a consistent desktop, fully personalized to their own preferences without the need for cumbersome profiles or complex scripting.

"I use AppSense Performance Manager to get an instant snapshot of resource utilization across our servers. We run some heavy applications - Microsoft Business Dynamics for example - and AppSense Performance Manager will alert me to any application chewing more resource than it should, enabling me to limit the server resource and bandwidth available to it. AppSense Environment Manager eliminates problems associated with Roaming Profiles and enhances the user experience across Terminal Services,"

Stenius concludes.



NETWORK ENVIRONMENT

- > 9 Microsoft 2003 Terminal Servers for daily operation
- > 2 Microsoft 2003 Terminal Servers for disaster recovery

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