

Major healthcare provider ensures optimal response to patient needs with AppSense



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Andy Fisher
Manager of Technical Services



Serving Texans since 1891, the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston (UTMB) is a leading academic medical center dedicated to health science education, high-quality patient care, cutting-edge research, and service to the community. Hundreds of thousands of patients from Galveston and beyond seek care at UTMB every year. UTMB is home to the oldest schools of medicine, nursing and allied health sciences in the state and has trained more Texas physicians than any other medical school.

UTMB's inpatient facilities in Galveston are amongst just four percent of hospitals nationwide to have earned Magnet Recognition for nursing excellence. UTMB also operates the Austin Women's Hospital in Austin, Texas, as well as an extensive network of campus and community-based clinics that offer primary and specialty care to serve the health needs of Texans across the state. The university recently broke ground for a state-of-the-art specialty care center in League City, which will open to patients in January 2010. UTMB is fully accredited by The Joint Commission.

BACKGROUND CHALLENGES

UTMB is responsible for the lives of hundreds of patients each day, so it is imperative that the IT department is equipped with the resources to provide faculty members and staff with access to patients' medical records at all times. Given that any time delay in accessing these records has the potential to impact directly on the welfare of a patient, UTMB wanted to ensure their IT systems were

not just good, but optimized to provide the best possible response times across the more than 100 applications running throughout their 125 server Citrix environment.

Andy Fisher, Manager of Technical Services for UTMB's Information Services department explains;

“In our line of work, it is important to prepare and equip ourselves for maximum usage and load. Our systems were running well, but we saw user demand increasing and wanted to ensure we would be prepared to support what would eventually become an additional strain on our resources.”

Like many major healthcare providers, one of UTMB's most critical applications is the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system. The Epic EMR system makes patient data readily available to clinicians by storing it in one centralized location that can be accessed no matter where the patient is being treated. One of the major challenges facing UTMB was the decision to deliver the Epic EMR application via Citrix to the entire user base.

HISTORY OF EMR DEPLOYMENT

“Epic EMR is a lifeline of our business. It has improved healthcare throughout the hospital, helped reduce the number of administrative errors, improved the continuity of care and helped our faculty and staff anticipate and respond to patients' needs. From an IT perspective, however, the application is particularly resource hungry. We were only getting around 40 users on each Citrix server and with over 2,000 concurrent users, the maintenance of this hardware was becoming costly,”

Fisher explained.

Challenge

- > Optimize the resources available to Epic EMR
- > Reduce profile corruption
- > Maximize use of hardware

Solution

- > AppSense Performance Manager
- > AppSense Environment Manager

Benefits

- > Zero profile corruption
- > Improved logon times
- > Improved server capacity
- > Reduced hardware costs

“The decision to implement AppSense was very easy for us. From a product perspective we felt that the interface was easy to administer, intuitive, and well designed. We were also impressed by the way the AppSense team whole-heartedly backed their product and we were very pleased with the level of pre-sales service that AppSense provided. The team responded to our technical issues accurately, assessed our environment thoroughly and provided demonstrations and face-to-face assistance at all times.”

Andy Fisher,
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UTMB was also grappling with profile corruption issues. Fisher comments;

"We saw an exponential increase in the profile corruptions in the client environment and those using a roaming profile would experience very sporadic logon times ranging from anywhere between ten seconds and two minutes. When profiles became corrupted, it would reduce the speed at which medical records could be retrieved and reviewed and we foresaw that in extreme circumstances, the situation had the potential to reduce the number of patients that could be treated during any period of time. It was imperative that we acted quickly to rectify the situation before it compromised patient care."

THE INTRODUCTION OF APPSENSE

Fisher and his team turned to AppSense's Management Suite to help solve their immediate logon problems and improve overall business processes.

UTMB initially rolled out two products from the suite - AppSense Performance Manager and AppSense Environment Manager. AppSense Performance Manager improves server capacity by optimizing system resources such as CPU, memory and disk, thus reducing the amount of hardware needed. AppSense Environment Manager provides easy policy configuration and profile management to improve logon/logoff times for all users.

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Upon implementation of AppSense Performance Manager, UTMB saw an immediate increase in the number of users per server. Fisher commented;

"Our Citrix environment is broken-up into two main farms, one housing our desktop infrastructure with a core set of standard applications and the other housing nothing but the Epic EMR application. It was on the Epic EMR farm that we were really keen to maximize the server use to ensure that resources were freed-up for this business critical application. With AppSense, we saw improved response times and doubled the number of users per server from 40 to 80. On top of that, it was a simple 'flick the switch' solution to ensure our hardware investment was utilized to its full potential."

AppSense Environment Manager addressed UTMB's profile corruption issues.

"It took less than two weeks to collect all of the user profile information and convert it to mandatory profiles. As soon as this was completed, our profile corruption completely disappeared. Given that we were previously having at least one user per day experiencing some form of inconvenience as a result of profile corruption, this was a great result,"

Fisher added.

Now that AppSense has addressed UTMB's core challenges, the medical center is now planning to implement AppSense Application Manager to achieve additional benefits in the coming months.

"The solution addressed our two key pain points in a matter of days. Users have already commented on the improvements from a profile corruption perspective and at the back end we have achieved a substantial return on our investment from hardware savings."

Fisher concluded.

NETWORK ENVIRONMENT

- > 125 Citrix servers across two main Citrix farms

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