

Case study

Conexus Credit Union slashes Citrix logon time with AppSense



“When we used AppSense to move the cookie folders from the Citrix profile to the users home drive, logon times were cut from seven minutes to six seconds! It was incredible!”

Trevor Allen,
Supervisor of Infrastructure Services at
Conexus

Introduction

Conexus Credit Union is Saskatchewan’s largest credit union and the seventh biggest in Canada. With over 1,000 employees serving more than 118,000 members, Conexus administers more than \$3.69 billion in assets. The organization has undergone a number of strategic mergers in the last five years which have broadened Conexus’ service offering to include financial and banking services, real estate and insurance.

Background challenges

Conexus had been running a centralized Citrix IT environment for over nine years, providing employees across all divisions and subsidiaries with access to more than 200 applications through thin client devices.

In recent years, Conexus employees began to complain about slow responses to simple tasks such as logging onto the system at the start of the day. This is because Citrix creates a profile for each user and downloads it in full every time they logon. The profiles had become excessively large and were taking a long time to download. Upon investigation, Trevor Allen, Supervisor of Infrastructure Services at Conexus discovered the primary cause of the large profiles was the number of cookie files each profile had attached to it.

Allen explains: “The quantity of cookies attached to each user profile has crept up recently, probably because we are increasingly using ASP for business critical programs - accessing them through the Internet rather than hosting them ourselves.”

Allen tried deleting some of the cookies but his actions caused problems when users tried to logon to applications, sometimes stopping access entirely. He needed a way to limit the number of cookies each profile needed to download every time it logged on, in the hopes of speeding up the user experience.

Separately, Conexus was also looking for a way to manage the complex application access requirements across the business. While over 200 applications are in use across the business - ranging from Microsoft Office™ to specialist banking applications - most individuals only require access to a handful.

Allen explains; “We needed a way to lock down access to certain applications, providing role-based access to ensure only the appropriate employees could use each program.”



Challenges

- Reduce application access and logon times
- Provide role-based access to applications

Solution

- AppSense Environment Manager
- AppSense Application Manager

Benefits

- 99% reduction in logon times
- Simple centralized application access control

AppSense.com
iwanttoknowmore@AppSense.com

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The introduction of AppSense

Allen first heard about AppSense at a Citrix iForum where he was looking for potential solutions to the cookie and access problems. Due to issues with printers and peripherals, Conexus had taken the decision to move from thin clients to locked-down low cost PCs and Allen was referred to AppSense to see if they could find a solution to work with the new infrastructure.

Allen comments; “I told the guys at AppSense about our issues and they were confident they could sort them all out for us. So we kicked off a pilot of AppSense Environment Manager and AppSense Application Manager.”

AppSense Environment Manager takes a user's settings, including application and OS-level personal settings, and manages that information independent of the desktop session. The profile is streamed to the user who sees a consistent desktop session, fully personalized to their own preferences without the need for cumbersome profiles or complex scripting. Importantly for Conexus, AppSense Environment Manager also can also redirect elements of a profile to be managed by the users home drive, presenting a solution to the cookie problem, as Allen explains:

“Our pilot with AppSense Environment Manager demonstrated to us that we could keep the central management of profiles but didn't need all the cookies to download each time. Moving the cookie folders to the users home drive reduced logon times from seven minutes to six seconds. That is a 99% reduction! It was so astounding that we stopped the pilot immediately and rolled it out across the board.”

AppSense Application Manager enables the IT department to define role-based access rights as well as setting parameters based on location, firewall settings and time of access. Application access can even be restricted by device, enabling Microsoft licensing to be easily enforced.

Allen explains the value AppSense Application Manager brings to Conexus; “We are using AppSense Application Manager to manage our group policies and have been relieved to find that it has dramatically simplified the process. The graphical user interface is very easy to use, making it much less time consuming to assign access rights across all divisions, subsidiaries and even right down to individual role level.”

Conexus is still at the beginning of its thin client to PC migration, but Allen is confident that AppSense has ironed out the problems and made it possible to make a few more changes to the company's critical IT infrastructure;

“We have migrated 50 PCs so far, and have another 450 in progress. We also have projects on the go to upgrade the Citrix environment to XenApp 4.5 and Microsoft Office 2007. We will run on the new Citrix farm for a couple of months to see how it performs but already have it on our list to talk to AppSense about their Performance Manager product to make sure our new set up is a sleek and optimized operation.”

Network environment

- 35 Citrix servers
- 50 low cost PCs
- 450 thin clients to be replaced over next two years

About AppSense

We are the leading provider of user virtualization technology to enterprise organizations. User virtualization is a way of managing user-specific information independent of the desktop, and applying this information into any desktop (local install, virtualized, published, streamed etc) on-demand. This enables IT to standardize the desktop build, automate desktop and application delivery, and migrate users to new desktops – all while ensuring the user experience is seamless, personal, predictable and easily manageable.