

Case study

Energy Producer dramatically lowers their desktop TCO by using AppSense Environment Manager



“By allowing us to effectively manage our desktop environment, AppSense Environment Manager has enabled us to move from an unmanaged desktop to a well-managed and dynamic desktop, ultimately decreasing our TCO.”

Darren Lloyd,
Desktop Practice Lead



Challenges

- Increase manageability of the desktop
- Improve ability to respond to dynamic and complex business needs
- Decrease user logon times

Solution

- AppSense Environment Manager

Benefits

- Improved logon times
- Increase in desktop manageability
- Increased flexibility and ability to apply and enforce complex business rules
- Desktop user personalization settings captured and managed automatically

About Enerplus

Established in 1986, Enerplus is one of Canada's oldest and largest independent oil and gas producers. It has built a portfolio of producing properties across western Canada and the United States with a focus on large oil and gas resource plays that offer growth potential as well as predictable production and repeatable development opportunities.

Background challenges

With more than 1,000 desktops located at offices from Calgary to Denver, the IT team at Enerplus found themselves spending increasing amounts of manual labor to complete simple tasks such as updating a desktop computer or installing new applications.

To address the problems they were experiencing when they installed and/or updated their applications, Enerplus deployed Microsoft Application Virtualization (App-V) in early 2007. Today, out of 400 applications in their production environment, between 65 to 70 percent are virtualized and running within App-V. To support their field staff located throughout Canada and the US, Enerplus also uses Citrix XenApp which allows remote access to the company's applications.

“We had been using App-V and XenApp for quite some time and they have been working quite well; however, in late 2008 we decided to take a whole different approach to our desktop strategy,” said Darren Lloyd, desktop practice lead at Enerplus.

“We began to look at the desktop in three distinct layers: the OS, applications, and user settings & data. It was at this time we started to look for a user virtualization solution that would reduce the dependencies between these layers and allow IT to more easily automate and manage the entire desktop environment.”

Before Enerplus began managing the desktop in three layers, their desktop environment required excessive manual assistance. Simple system updates required many login scripts which became very complex and consumed much of the IT department's time, and user profile migration was a manual effort which would often migrate corrupt settings from old systems to new systems.

“We needed to focus from the top down, so rather than starting from the bottom where the OS and hardware reside, we decided to deal with the top layer - the user layer - and move down from there,” said Lloyd.

“The way I see it is that if you can deal with the user layer and the app layer, then swapping out an operating system or migrating to virtual desktops becomes a lot simpler because all of the data has been captured, centralized and decoupled from the OS and is streamed on demand.”

The introduction of AppSense

During their research, they looked at RTO Software and Windows Roaming Profiles, but after being introduced to AppSense at a technology tradeshow, Enerplus realized that the granularity and agility that AppSense Environment Manager provides could not be matched by any other technology. Enerplus began using AppSense Environment Manager in March 2009.

“Our environment is extremely dynamic and we have many unique business requests that RTO or Windows Roaming Profile couldn't address,” stated Lloyd.

“AppSense provides a comprehensive, flexible solution that addresses all of the requirements needed for our environment. In addition to the seamless experience AppSense delivers to our end users, we were also attracted to the 'per application' personalization and rollback capabilities in Environment Manager.”

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Desktop Practice Lead

Benefits of AppSense

With AppSense Environment Manager, roaming profiles are eliminated to allow for personalization settings to be managed and streamed at the application level, resulting in reduced profile size and enabling independent management of user profile data on a per application basis. Enerplus finds this feature extremely useful as it saves a significant amount of time. Prior to AppSense, when there was a problem with a single application on a desktop, the Enerplus IT team would need to delete the entire user profile and then recreate it. Now they are able to fix the application without disrupting the user profile.

Additionally, Environment Manager’s personalization rollback capability was a key differentiator in why Enerplus chose the solution. AppSense Environment Manager takes scheduled snapshots of the user settings and is able to rollback the settings to a previous known ‘good’ snapshot for a user on a per application basis.

“The rollback capability aligns with our vision that users should be able to experience a simple, consistent user environment while having access to the services they require,” explained Lloyd. “We believe this will ultimately lead to an increase in user productivity in addition to decreasing management costs.”

AppSense Environment Manager has also delivered dramatically faster logon times, cutting the average login time in half. In addition to increasing end user productivity, AppSense has also allowed the IT department to save time and manual effort. Prior to deploying Environment Manager, when a user needed a new application or to update their hardware IT needed to back up their settings. However, in most cases, the data was lost anyways and the user would have to recreate their desktop which could take days to restore it back to its original state.

“Both the IT department and our end users have experienced significant time savings with AppSense. By allowing us to effectively manage our desktop environment, AppSense Environment Manager has enabled us to move from an unmanaged desktop to a well-managed and dynamic desktop, ultimately decreasing our TCO,” said Lloyd.

“We are also using AppSense to enforce items such as mapped drives and printers, registry settings, self-healing, application configuration settings and group policies in order to provide a consistent desktop to our end users. These policies are tied to specific conditions according to business rules which allow us to provide a contextualized desktop experience to our end users. Whether it’s a desktop computer, a common-use or boardroom computer, or a laptop outside of the corporate network, AppSense allows us to tailor the user experience accordingly.”

Recently, Enerplus completed a project to refresh all desktops in their Denver office as a means to further organize their desktop environment.

“Without AppSense managing the user layer, it would have been a lot more difficult and required more manual effort to get users back up to speed and running,” described Lloyd. “We will continue our use of AppSense and when we eventually migrate to Windows 7 and look to virtual desktops, AppSense will enable us to make this transition easily.”

Future plans

Enerplus plans to continue rolling out AppSense on their desktops and hopes to eventually deploy the entire AppSense Management Suite with AppSense Performance Manager and Application Manager in their Citrix XenApp environment.

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.