

Case study

Leading insurance provider selects AppSense for their desktop virtualization deployment to support offshore developers



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Ben Euers,
Infrastructure architect at QBE

About QBE

QBE Insurance Group Limited is an Australian-based general insurance provider and one of the top 25 insurers and reinsurers worldwide with offices in 49 countries.

With more than 13,000 employees, QBE maintains operations in key global insurance markets and continues to be a lead underwriter for selected lines of business, setting rates and conditions in the markets in which they operate. QBE Group has successfully completed more than 125 acquisitions since their first acquisition in 1982 and has grown substantially, particularly over the last 10 years. In 2009, QBE’s gross written premium was \$14.5 billion.

Background challenges

For the past few years, the IT department at QBE had been looking into desktop virtualization to determine if there was a solid use case for it in their desktop environment; however it wasn’t until they outsourced the majority of their application developers they realized adopting desktop virtualization was a necessity for their offshore development. To accommodate their needs, QBE deployed Citrix XenDesktop in early 2009.

“We practically outsourced our entire IT department overnight and needed to virtualize our desktops as soon as possible,” said Ben Euers, infrastructure architect at QBE.

“Initially when we were testing the virtual desktop deployment we used our standard desktop build and architecture including login scripts, preconfigured group policy object scenarios, and roaming profiles. However, the startup and logon times were very slow and would have been unacceptable, especially compared to our physical desktops.”

The introduction of AppSense

Over the past seven years, QBE has been using AppSense Performance Manager in their Citrix XenApp environment to improve server utilization rates for which they hold 3,000 licenses of AppSense Management Suite. QBE also deployed AppSense Environment Manager in 2009 to help them manage user profiles.

“We needed something that would give our users the same experience whether their desktop was virtual or physical,” stated Euers.

“Managing user profiles is extremely important to us and the decision to choose AppSense was really a no brainer. AppSense Environment Manager’s feature-set is very comprehensive and no other user virtualization technology came close to what we needed. Additionally, we found AppSense easy to setup and manage so we were able to get up and running fast.”

Benefits of AppSense

QBE rolled out AppSense on their virtual desktop deployment in segments, adding groups at a time. AppSense Environment Manager has allowed them to quickly add new users, significantly decreasing the time IT typically spent on this task.



Challenges

- Increase manageability of the desktop
- Decrease user logon times
- Support offshore workers

Solution

- AppSense Management Suite

Benefits

- Improved logon times
- Seamless migration between desktops regardless of delivery mechanism or operating system
- End user satisfaction
- User personalization

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Infrastructure architect at QBE

“By delivering virtual desktops in the way that we do and by using AppSense, we save a weeks’ worth of effort for every 20 users that are added,” stated Euers.

AppSense Environment Manager has also helped decrease the logon times experienced by the users, and simplified management.

“We have been able to reduce virtual desktop logon times by 50 to 60 percent by removing the login scripts and GPOs and placing the information into AppSense Environment Manager,” said Euers.

“Additionally, AppSense has also made logon times quicker than a traditional PC by about 10 percent, significantly increasing our end user productivity.”

In addition to decreasing logon times and increasing user productivity, AppSense has also helped QBE dramatically improve the total cost of ownership (TCO) of a virtual desktop. AppSense Environment Manager allows QBE to deploy a shared desktop image to users using Citrix Provisioning Server while retaining all of the user configuration settings between different sessions. This feature enabled QBE to save approximately five terabytes of storage for their first deployment of 150 virtual desktops compared with traditional virtual machine cloning.

QBE places a high value on end user acceptance as the IT team realizes that it is extremely important to ensure high productivity and end user satisfaction. After deploying AppSense Environment Manager end users were unable to differentiate between their physical and virtual machine.

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Future plans

QBE is continuing to roll out AppSense Environment Manager in their virtual desktops and hopes to complete installation across their entire desktop estate by the end of 2010.

“AppSense Environment Manager is the key to the future of our desktop environment,” explained Euers.

“Not only will it provide our users with a persistent desktop whether they are using a PC, laptop or virtual desktop, but it will also be critical to our upgrade to Windows 7 and Server 2008 R2. We were early adopters of Vista and know how difficult it is to go through a desktop OS switch; however, we expect AppSense Environment Manager to allow us to seamlessly migrate to Windows 7.”

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.