

Case study

AppSense enables global recruitment company to reduce IT operational expenditure by 20% and carbon output by 2,500 tonnes



“AppSense solved our thin client application management issues overnight - it was like flicking a switch”

Sean Whetstone
Head of IT Services , Reed

Introduction

The Reed family of companies is a global recruitment and training services group, serving 11 countries across Europe, the Middle East and Asia. A privately owned company, Reed has over 4,000 permanent employees ranging across familiar brands such as Reed Specialist Recruitment, Reed Learning, Reed In Partnership and Reed.co.uk - the UK's largest online job site. IT support for all companies within the Reed family is provided by Reed Specialist Recruitment on a fee-per-desktop basis.

Background challenges

With Reed's millennium technology approaching its end-of-life, Reed Specialist Recruitment was working in overdrive to sweat the assets - chiefly “fat” PCs, with a server in every office. This set up was extremely resource intensive, requiring a great deal of support and high operational costs associated with man-power and travel. It also used an excessive amount of power and did not allow for flexible working between offices. In addition, Reed's international expansion plans required IT infrastructure that could easily support new offices in other continents without needing on-site technical support and expensive equipment.

Using the encroaching end-of-service-life as a motivator, Reed's Head of IT Services Sean Whetstone was determined to overhaul technology across the group;

“Thin client was the obvious choice, enabling us to centralize IT across all Reed companies. We decided 64bit Citrix running on blades was the best option and immediately achieved quantifiable efficiencies, maximizing the use of server capacity.”

Reed consolidated from 300 server locations to just two data centers, reducing server count by 80 per cent.

However, the new thin client approach left Whetstone and his team with some unexpected challenges;

“We could run up to 100 users on a single blade, but we have hungry users and they use a lot of applications. The problem was not the number of applications, but their unpredictability. We kept finding that a single user or application could swallow all the available resources on the blade and some of the more essential applications were causing the most disruption - Internet Explorer and Lotus Notes for example. With one person using 100 per cent of the resource, 99 others had a productivity level of zero!”

Whetstone needed to find a way to impose limits on certain applications in order to ensure the success of the new IT infrastructure.



Challenges

- Reduce support requirements
- Control resource hungry applications
- Maintain and build environmentally conscious IT infrastructure

Solution

- AppSense Performance Manager Citrix/VMware blades

Benefits

- Maximum use of server resources
- Application resource control
- Optimized user experience

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The introduction of AppSense

Reed had used AppSense Performance Manager during an earlier Citrix pilot in order to address the memory bottle necks encountered in a 32bit environment. Considering the application strangulation issue, Whetstone thought AppSense might again hold the answer.

With AppSense Performance Manager, users do not have to wait for business critical applications to execute and respond to their actions. Application and user environments are optimized to ensure maximum hardware utilization with an optimal, consistent quality of service. Using AppSense Performance Manager Reed was able to identify the hungry applications and limit the resource available to them, ensuring there is always enough capacity for every user on the server.

Whetstone comments; “AppSense Performance Manager solved our resource issues in one go. We installed it and overnight unpredictable applications stopped chewing up capacity.”

With the processing speed frustrations removed, Reed’s thin client infrastructure is now meeting the group’s requirements. Reed Specialist Recruitment has granular control over each individual application’s performance, protecting productivity and ensuring quality of service.

The group has reduced its server count by 450 and replaced 5,100 PCs with inexpensive Wyse thin client terminals. Combined, the new set up has achieved the desired 20% reduction in IT operational expenditure, reduced the carbon output of Reed by 2,500 tonnes (20%) and the cut the group’s electricity bills by £100,000 per annum. Marking the impact of the new IT systems Reed won the 2008 City of London Resource Conservation Award, known as a Green Oscar.

Whetstone concludes: “Being able to start from scratch with our IT infrastructure gave us the freedom to achievesome very ambitious objectives, but the big solutions rarely work straight out of the box. AppSense was the final piece in the puzzle, making the whole solution work.”

Network environment

- 84 x HP 64bit AMD blades running Citrix. 5,100 Wyse thin client terminals.
- 18 Virtual Windows 2003 Servers running Citrix Infrastructure.

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.