

Case study

Efficiency Secured in Terminal Server Environment for Royal London



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Spencer Taylor,
Projects and Governance Manager,
Royal London Group



Challenges

- Ineffective application management
- Costly operational and software licensing fees
- Low server utilization

Solution

- AppSense Management Suite
- 400 users

Benefits

- Enabled efficient and cost-effective application management
- Increased compliance with software licensing
- Eliminated the threat of unauthorized applications

Background

Royal London Group is the UK's largest mutual life insurer, and consists of The Royal London Mutual Insurance Society Limited and its subsidiaries. The Group has over three million customers and funds under management of £28.8 Billion. The Group's businesses offer pensions, life assurance, savings and investment products and protection insurance, as well as providing investment management.

The Royal London Group IT Service Delivery department was recently in the process of reviewing effective technologies that would be advantageous to the Group as a whole. During this process, a project was instigated to deploy thin client desktops in the Customer Services Department sited in Wilmslow, Cheshire. The implementation raised several issues, including the ability to run multiple copies of bespoke and third party applications within this environment. For example, a mainframe emulator package that runs critical administrative tasks for many of the CustomerServices staff was found to use an unnecessary amount of server resource, which jeopardized other applications from running.

Spencer Taylor is responsible for the delivery of all infrastructure projects, including the deployment of thin client desktops within Royal London. Taylor, the Projects and Governance Manager, has recently completed a project to deliver some of the organization's business critical applications via Citrix.

Managing badly behaved applications

Royal London Group conducted a phase of analysis to gain valuable experience about any performance problems incurred due to rogue applications. These problems could override other applications as they were attempting to run, potentially causing a negative cycle of poor system performance and productivity while increasing operational costs. Taylor knew it would be worth finding a way to stop applications tripping each other up, as well as reducing the potentially spiralling costs of hardware by maximizing server resources.

According to Taylor, “We could see during the thin client environment build that we were losing valuable IT resources on our servers due to the processing power required by some of the applications we were running. One application in particular used 50 percent of a single server's processing capabilities, meaning that only two users per server could run the application. If this performance issue could not be resolved the proposed Citrix Platform would not have been viable.”

The key driver for reviewing AppSense was to help solve these performance issues. Taylor began talking to AppSense about their Performance Manager software and its CPU optimization capabilities. However, during the evaluation process the scope broadened slightly to include other areas that would also help increase the efficiency and security of the Citrix infrastructure.

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Locking down application features and managing profiles

A potential security issue was identified in the testing environment that offered cause for concern. Microsoft Office allowed users to access the C drive via the File Open Window facility. This was deemed to be a risk due to the changes that a user would potentially be able to make. AppSense Performance Manager’s sister product, AppSense Environment Manager, would allow Royal London to lock down and remove this feature in order to mitigate the threat of this ever happening. In doing so, this issue was fixed prior to roll out so that this was only ever seen during testing and subsequently solved.

Another benefit of AppSense Environment Manager is better management of user profiles - traditionally done through Permissions. When Taylor’s team learned that AppSense Environment Manager enables you to reduce logon times, minimize profiles and prevent profile corruption they were really happy to move over from the existing method in use. Immediately they found the AppSense solution to be much easier to use which saved time and resource. Ultimately, these solutions combined helped to improve the end user experience by delivering a consistent and simplified environment.

AppSense management suite efficiency

After a successful pilot, Royal London Group decided to deploy AppSense Performance Manager and AppSense Environment Manager immediately. However, they decided to purchase the complete AppSense Management Suite, which in addition to the two products tested also includes AppSense Application Manager, which ensures no unwanted or unknown applications are able to run across the network.

The deployment was very simple and the organization witnessed immediate results, including:

System performance

By being better able to effectively manage and distribute available processing power to users the organization can now have 30 users running applications on one server. In the past this had been sometimes as low as 2 users per server.

Operational efficiency and productivity

Increasing the efficiency and availability of computing resources by making them available to the right applications and the right people.

Preserving it integrity

“We were facing a serious issue with business -critical applications eating away at our server resources and we knew that we had to find a solution to alleviate this problem,” said Taylor.

“AppSense technology was able to resolve our performance issues while delivering other related system improvements. Although this has surpassed our expectations it doesn’t stop there, as now we also intend to realize additional benefits, including software licensing controls and enhanced security.” Taylor concludes,

“The AppSense Management Suite has delivered the performance improvements and cost savings we asked for while increasing productivity. It is rich with helpful technology and I’m certain there are more benefits to come but I’m really impressed with what we have been able to achieve so quickly.”

Technical overview

Applications Deployed:

- FoxPro, Office Suite, Lotus Approach
- Database applications
- Terminal emulators i.e Bull, IBM and ICL Delphi
- Respond

Networking environment

- 2 IBM Blade Enclosures
- 12 IBM BladeCenters
- Windows Server 2003
- 10 Citrix servers

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.