Education
St Rita's College

AppSense®

Case study

AppSense delivers greater network security and flexibility to St Rita's College

"It's another one of those 'set and forget' features within AppSense that has given us the ability to improve our network performance without the need for constant attention another reason why AppSense is every bit as critical to our network as any other application we currently run."

Dean Tome
Network Administrator, St Rita's College

Challenges

- Requirement to source a solution to control resource hungry applications and reduce system administration cost

Solution

- AppSense Management Suite deployed across Citrix farm

Benefits

- Reduced administration through intelligent, dynamic server management
- Simplified and more accurate control of application software license management
- Improved utilization of servers, particularly in regard to legacy applications and educational multimedia software

Background

From its humble beginnings in 1926 as a kindergarten to senior school and with only 16 students, St Rita's College is recognised as one of Australia's foremost all-girls private education institutions. Now, with a staff count of 87 and approximately 800 students, St Rita's maintains its fundamental mission of educating its students in partnership with their families and in keeping with its motto of 'Virtute non Verbis' - Action not Words.

Dealing with servers that grind to a halt

St Rita's Network Administrator, Dean Tome, oversaw the upgrade of the College's network to a server based/thin client environment utilizing Citrix and Windows 2003 server. Among the many challenges, was the need to ensure the new network was able to run numerous legacy 16-bit applications that were so resource hungry, they could easily bring servers to a halt with as little as only two users.

"One of the main reasons for the decision to adopt a Citrix thin client model," Tome says, "was to minimize costs by using thin clients in place of a fully PC-based client environment. But we didn't want to save money with the clients only to then lose that saving through having to increase the number of servers. This meant we needed a solution that could give us greater control over the applications' resource usage, while simultaneously improving network security in such a way as to reduce system administration overheads."

AppSense delivers server self management

In commenting on the value AppSense has brought St Rita's through reduced system administration requirements, Tome states: "I'd have to say that the true indication of the benefits in this area is that we haven't even had to touch the software in over 18 months; and all the while it's examining processes and balancing server processor and memory allocations without any form of manual intervention."

Underpinning that automatic server resource management capability is the AppSense Intelligent Process Management (IPM) technology, which dynamically prioritizes and smoothes the unpredictable demands that are placed on the server's processor and memory resources.

This has proven to be of particular benefit in light of the various legacy 16-bit applications that are still in use by the College.

"We have about three or four applications in that category, which we need in both education and administration," Tome says. "Regardless of the fact they're designed in such a way as to literally 'hog' as much memory and processor availability as possible, AppSense automatically limits the amount of both to each of the applications. The result of this is that by limiting the resources available to any server based application, the AppSense solution has totally eliminated all instances of server crashes brought about by applications over utilizing the server resources."

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Protecting the network from unauthorized executables

While all St Rita's students are well versed in the need to avoid introducing non-approved applications and other executable files to the College's IT environment, Tome is all too aware of the possibility of their inadvertent introduction via stealth technologies; and this is yet one more area in which the AppSense solution continues to afford significant benefits.

"One of the most important factors in running an educational network environment is to be incredibly secure yet allow a fair degree of freedom for the teachers and students," Tome says. "This means giving them the opportunity to make mistakes - such as clicking on Web links that unknown to them may cause an application to be downloaded and installed in the background - and protecting them at the same time. Fortunately, this is precisely what we have been able to achieve with the AppSense software; the ideal balance between freedom and security."

Simplifying software license management

With a client device population of over 350, representing a mix of Windows XP-based PCs and Wyse terminals, maintaining compliance with software license agreements has emerged as a major benefit arising from the AppSense implementation.

"We have a wide variety of desktop applications, ranging from the Microsoft Office suite and Adobe Acrobat through to multimedia education titles," Tome explains."The problem has always been how to best ensure the number of simultaneous instancesof those applications being run never exceeds the number specified in our license agreements."

By defining rules within AppSense, Tome has been able to restrict access to applications based either on particular groups of users, such as teaching or administration staff, or the number of client devices.

"It's another one of those 'set and forget' features within AppSense that have given us the ability to improve our network performance without the need for constant attention," Tome says. "And that's another reason why AppSense is every bit as critical to our network as any other application we currently run."

Technical overview

Applications Deployed on AppSense:

- Microsoft Exchange Server
- Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS)
- Microsoft Office, SurfControl

Networking environment:

- 14 Citrix Servers
- 130 Wyse Terminals
- 200+ Windows XP-based PCs
- AppSense Management Suite

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.