



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

Kent County Council is the governing council of the non-metropolitan county of Kent. With 84 elected councillors, 1.4m residents and an area covering over 1,300 square miles, it is the largest local authority in England.

CHALLENGE

Kent County Council is undergoing a large modernisation programme in order to provide its staff and partners with the ability to work in a much more efficient, mobile and flexible way.

The Council determined that moving its 11,000+ staff to virtualised desktops would be the best way to achieve this objective, while at the same time yielding additional benefits such as adding greater resilience and flexibility to the overall IT infrastructure while protecting the Council against the impending risks brought about by the retirement of Windows XP support on 8 April 2014.

Given the climate of budget cuts affecting every local authority in the country, the project also needed to prove

AT-A-GLANCE

Challenge

Kent County Council sought to modernise its aging Windows XP desktop estate with thin clients in order to provide a more modern working environment for its staff while lowering its overall operational costs.

Solution

Phoenix Software proposed a Windows 7 virtual desktop infrastructure based on VMware Horizon.

Benefits

Kent County Council has been able to lower operational costs by one third while at the same time delivering the flexible, modern working environment that it envisioned for its workforce.

significant value-for-money for the Council. By re-utilising the Council's existing Cisco UCS servers and 11,000 Windows XP desktops as thin clients, a virtualised desktop approach would unlock additional value from its existing hardware investments. Additionally, since virtual desktops would allow its staff to work productively from home, the project would also enable the Council to meet its target of rationalising one third of its total office space without affecting the services provided to its 1.4m residents.

The Council, therefore, issued a tender for software licences and an implementation partner for a desktop and application virtualisation technology to deliver a thin client capability across the entire council (11,000 users – 6,500 of which concurrent).

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Glen Larkin
Lead Technical Architect
Kent County Council



SOLUTION

Phoenix Software partnered with VMware to propose a Windows 7 virtual desktop solution based on VMware Horizon. Phoenix Software was the only IT services provider to propose a VMware solution (all the other bids consisted of Citrix VDI solutions).

The Council's existing IT infrastructure consisted of two EMC Clarion NS960 SANs and Cisco UCS servers running Microsoft Server 2008 R2. To ensure resilience, the Council stipulated that the proposed VMware solution would need to run 50/50 on the Council's two data centres in Maidstone and Medway. Since the Council already used Cisco UCS servers with VMware vSphere Enterprise Plus as its core virtualisation technology, Phoenix Software's proposed VMware Horizon solution would further help the Council to leverage its existing ICT investments, delivering additional value for money.

Glen Larkin, lead technical architect at Kent County Council explains how Phoenix met the brief: “The technical solution that Phoenix Software proposed was innovative in light of the design constraints that we set out, while it also had best value for the council in mind. By ensuring that we re-used our existing systems whenever we could and focusing solely on the requirements that we stated (instead of unnecessary and expensive ‘bells and whistles’), Phoenix proved they had our best interests in mind.”

Upon winning the contract, Phoenix Software began by conducting an extensive discovery phase in order to understand how Council staff were using their existing desktops. With the discovery phase taking place over two whole months, Phoenix was able to really tailor the solution to the Council's requirements which further helped to improve user acceptance upon deployment.

To further reassure the Council of the stability of the proposed VMware Horizon platform, Phoenix also provided the Council with access to its VDI demonstration site during the procurement process, in addition to letting the Council test the solution from black spots where connectivity was known to be consistently unreliable for its staff.

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Glen Larkin
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BENEFITS

Larkin explains why his team chose the Phoenix/VMware solution over the alternative proposals: “We were particularly impressed with the technical capability of the VMware solution and the level of detail in Phoenix Software’s proposal. We felt that the VMware product is more modern in its design and does not rely too heavily on multiple products to support its functionality. Administration is simple and the user experience is very modern.”

“The tender response itself was also of very good quality. Phoenix Software had clearly taken the time to understand us and our requirements. While other bids were deep in technical detail but lacking in business understanding and failed to show how the solution would deliver our outcomes, the Phoenix responses were clear and concise. When the solution did what we needed they said so, but more importantly, they were proactive in telling us whenever it didn’t.”

By delivering the solution in stages over the course of a year – starting with a pilot environment of 500 users in a brand new building – Phoenix was able to mitigate deployment risks while improving User Acceptance Testing.

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Kent County Council expects to save one third off the operating costs of its core desktop infrastructure when compared with the aging Windows XP estate that it replaced. In addition to these headline cost savings, the project also delivered all of the other benefits that the Council was seeking from the project. Council staff now have the option to work remotely, improving both their overall productivity and standard of living, while at the same time enabling the Council to realise cost savings through its office space consolidation. Deploying more up-to-date software to its staff and centralising the desktop support function will also lead to the IT function receiving an expected 80% fewer support calls.

“Phoenix Software delivered a complete VDI solution which does exactly what the design promised and in the very short implementation timescale that we gave them. You can’t ask for more than that,” concludes Larkin.

Looking to the future, the hybrid VMware offering also positions the Council well for moving its infrastructure to the cloud, which is something it intends to do in the near future.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

To find out how we can help you transform any aspect of your IT estate, contact the Phoenix Team now on:

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