



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

VALLEYS TO COAST

Valleys to Coast (V2C) is a not-for-profit Housing Association which manages approximately 6,000 properties within the county borough of Bridgend and was formed in 2003. V2C employs close to 200 people located across three offices in the borough.

V2C has been a Phoenix Software customer for over seven years. It is a relationship that has grown from an initial software purchase to ongoing support of specialist software and equipment. Phoenix Software is now V2C's largest single supplier of IT services.

CHALLENGE

Valleys to Coast's IBM PCs and laptops were approaching seven years of age. While the IT team had done all they could to keep the equipment functioning for the organisation's 160+ users, it was clear the hardware needed to be replaced. The organisation was faced with the choice of replacing the desktop equipment on a like-for-like basis or investigating alternatives such as thin client technology allied to desktop virtualisation.

AT-A-GLANCE

Challenge

V2C needed to replace its ageing PCs with a modern infrastructure that was easier to manage, cheaper to maintain and delivered a significantly improved experience for its users.

Solution

Phoenix Software's award-winning VDI (virtual desktop infrastructure) based on VMware View, VMware vSphere and Fusion-io SSDs. Phoenix has since received a number of awards for its innovation with VMware VDI solutions – Global and EMEA Academic Partner, Global and EMEA Desktop Partner, EMEA Partner Executive Most Vaunted Person, UK's Most Innovative Solution and UK Marketing Campaign of the Year.

Benefits

PC boot time was reduced significantly from five minutes to less than one, as was overall desktop application performance. Management of the IT estate was also improved as V2C can now manage the bulk of the 160+ desktops from a central location.

“Phoenix’s proposed solution was head and shoulders above their competitors in terms of technical specification and performance. As it was based on VMware, this allowed V2C’s IT staff to build on the experience they had already gained using VMware virtualisation software on the server side. Another big plus for us was that Phoenix was prepared to support us in our requirement to continue using IBM hardware – they specified and sourced the server hardware for us. Alternative solutions were based on implementing bespoke servers and/or software that V2C’s IT staff were completely unfamiliar with”

Nick Meyrick
Head of IT
Valleys to Coast

Initial discussions around the desktop refresh project were informal but when the decision to implement was taken by V2C’s Board, Phoenix was one of three suppliers shortlisted to implement a proof of concept (POC) of their proposal. Phoenix already enjoyed a good reputation, as far as V2C was concerned, as a software and consultancy supplier in the social housing sector. Having also contracted Phoenix for the virtualisation of their server estate previously, V2C had first-hand experience of the company’s virtualisation expertise, and was impressed with their skills in solution design, implementation and post implementation support.

SOLUTION

Phoenix proposed its award-winning desktop virtualisation solution based on VMware View and vSphere, and was able to supply a number of reference sites prior to being shortlisted for the proof of concept.

The solution proposed used Fusion-io Solid State Drives (SSDs) instead of a traditional SAN to deliver significantly improved performance for virtual desktops over traditional spindle based drives (HDDs). This was also a distributed solution which gave the organisation full failover capability to its Bryncethin site in case the primary data centre in Bridgend failed.

The IBM desktops were replaced with Wyse P20 thin client devices, capable of supporting the VMware proprietary networking protocol PCoIP. These, in turn host the VMware VDI virtual desktop session. These terminals also support two active monitor sessions – a specific requirement for V2C as the organisation has some users who need a very large desktop so they can open multiple application sessions simultaneously.

BENEFITS

The key driver of the project was to improve the working environment and ultimately the productivity of V2C’s end users, while also reducing the maintenance overhead associated with approximately 160 physical PCs. Prior to upgrade, the PCs were taking anywhere up to five minutes to boot up, crashed regularly and were slow and frustrating to use. After the VDI rollout, desktop start up times were reduced to less than one minute, and users were very enthusiastic about the move to thin clients. Maintenance of the desktops has also been reduced as it is now conducted centrally, so most software changes, fixes and upgrades can be completed remotely and much more quickly. Meyrick adds “as important to us as the technical capability and experience that Phoenix brings is the relationship we have with their staff – from the sales director, through to the account management team and across to the technical consultants. They are all extremely helpful, supportive and easy to work with.”

As a result of Phoenix Software’s innovative approach to VDI using VMware solutions, the company has since been awarded a significant number of VMware partner awards – Global and EMEA Academic Partner, Global and EMEA Desktop Partner, EMEA Partner Executive Most Vaunted Person, UK’s Most Innovative Solution and UK Marketing Campaign of the Year.

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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