



Case Study

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Case Study – The Living Centre’s Deployment of ThinManager Platform & Arista Thin Clients

Client Company Profile

The Living Centre (TLC), a long standing group of furniture companies was incorporated 50 years ago. The company started out as an outdoor furniture store specializing in patio furniture, by Walter Bickley. Expansion into indoor furniture started when David and Danny Moniz acquired the company in 1990. The TLC group now consists of three main stores, The Sleep Centre, which specializes in mattresses and bedroom furniture, Casual Living, a designer furniture store, and Furniture Basics, which provides reliable modern furniture at reasonable prices. TLC currently employs upwards of 40 staff and reports estimated annual revenues of \$8M to \$12M.

ThinManager Partner Profile

Computer City became the local ThinManager partner in 2009. ThinManager is well known for its functionality, reliability and ease-of-use in managing ‘Terminal servers’ and ‘thin clients’. ThinManager has been a leader in this market for many years, offering a useful variety of modules to meet the demands and goals of each client’s unique environment. ThinManager is one of the most trusted thin client management software platforms on the market, utilized in industry leading businesses such as 3M, UPS and Kraft due to the advanced virtualization features, the support for 64bit software, and compatibility with other IP network solutions such as phones and surveillance (which Computer City provides for TLC as well).

Business Situation #1

Following a complimentary consultation with Computer City’s Sales and Technical Consultants, TLC was motivated to explore technical solutions that would reduce day-day operational expenses. Reducing their number of monthly IT support calls was our primary focus, using previous year’s data we were able to determine that a significant number of the support calls requested by TLC were found to be problems caused by user actions that could be eliminated through basic user training, automating scheduled processes and limiting user access. Another large number of support calls were simply maintaining and replacing hardware components, and since the vast majority of all users have basic computer skills, we recommended transitioning to thin client systems as their existing PC systems reach their end of life, which saves on maintenance support since there are no moving components to fail, and saves on user error support since thin clients are easier to lock down. Due to the applications running on the terminal server, less time is used due to reductions in imaging, updates and upgrades, since everything is done on the server instead of the individual systems. The thin clients would also utilize a fraction of the electricity consumed by existing PCs, with the potential to save thousands every year in energy costs.

Solution #1

The ThinManager platform was first implemented at TLC in early 2009.

Computer City's Systems Engineers designed and deployed the ThinManager software platform to enhance their existing infrastructure, centralizing the rollout of applications to multiple systems throughout the company, initially to their "fat" terminals (existing computers). While there are many ThinManager modules available to TLC, the two main modules being used are Failover and SmartSession, which provided much needed redundancy and load balancing while utilizing existing infrastructure. Failover allows a computer to be assigned to multiple terminal servers. If the main terminal server fails, the ThinManager software will detect it and switch to an assigned back up terminal server, preventing downtime for the employee affected.

SmartSession (load balancing module) helps the actual terminal servers to run smoothly and efficiently. When too many computers or thin terminals are on one server it increases the load on CPU and memory usage causing systems to slow down due to the heavy use. ThinManager SmartSession will recognize the heavy load and switch connection of the system to a terminal server with the lightest load.

Solution #2

The first group of Arista Thin Clients was deployed in late 2009.

Upon the initial installation of ThinManager software, an Arista Thin Client was installed as a testing unit. Thin Clients are simplified network computer devices that are designed without hard drives and other moving components minimizing downtime and eliminating repair expenses. They are also designed to provide 5-10 years of reliable service, and do not require any of the regular maintenance or updates of a traditional 'Fat Client' computer, since this is all pushed from the server. Managers at TLC examined support calls in the months following this test deployment and found that there was not a single support call made on that Thin Client, even though the user with the test equipment was previously making multiple PC support calls a month, including user-error type calls. As a result of the test results, additional Thin Clients were installed in 2010, and currently all sales staff are now operating on Arista Thin Client terminals on ThinManager platform, with more on the way, including Arista's "power-user" Thin Clients which can support 4 high resolution displays.

Return on Investment

By implementing these Arista Thin Clients running the Thin Manager Platform at their Sleep Centre location, David Moniz saw an immediate 13% reduction in power consumption, along with a 90% reduction in parts, labour and maintenance, and will enjoy 10 year lifespan on these thin clients, compared to 5 year expected life on traditional desktops. The Living Centre currently has 33 computer systems in their environment, 3 of which are currently thin clients, with plans to replace more desktops in the next year. By using 3 thin clients in their environment, TLC has already saved almost \$1000 in operating cost in the last 2 years, and over the next 8 years, they will save another \$4000 on these three systems alone. By continuing this trend and replacing the majority of their desktops with thin clients, TLC could reduce their yearly IT operating costs by 40%.

And according to David, "Even in today's technology-driven world we still have employees who are learning to use computers, and can inadvertently cause issues that cost the company real money, but with this Thin Manager solution, we can empower our inexperienced users while still lowering our overall expenses."