

Case study

"Any municipal organization looking to roll out virtual desktop infrastructure needs to be looking at AppSense because it really helps take those environments to the next level."

Brooks Bennett,
Chief Information Officer for the City of Round Rock



Round Rock, Texas turns to AppSense to increase value of IT investments

Challenges

- Improve users' VMware View experience
- Secure and control user data
- Support streamlined and efficient citizen service delivery

Solution

- AppSense DesktopNow Plus

Benefits

- Allows users to seamlessly move between physical and virtual desktops
- Extends the value of VMware View implementation
- Improves user experience and reduces logon times
- Reduces help desk tickets related to offline file synchronization
- Decreases time needed for system restores by 84%

The City of Round Rock maintains more than 400 physical desktop machines and, over the past two years, has deployed 350-plus virtual desktops using the VMware View platform. "It's extremely easy to administer the system and push out updates," notes Brooks Bennett, Assistant City Manager for the City of Round Rock. "We don't have to move from computer to computer to ensure that we have a standard environment that functions at a high level and delivers value for the citizens who are ultimately paying for the technology."

Trouble in paradise: The 'Kitty Cat Wallpaper' problem

Along with the benefits of desktop virtualization came an issue unique to virtual desktop environments. "A lot of people like to have their kids' pictures, a cat or something else personal as their desktop wallpaper," explains Bennett. "We didn't want to take that away from people as we moved them from the physical to the virtual. We call it the 'kitty cat wall paper' problem."

Omesh Pertob, City of Round Rock's Virtualization Architect adds, "We couldn't use all the VMware licenses we had because users were pushing back. They wanted a virtual desktop to be personalized like their physical machines."

To solve the problem, Round Rock deployed AppSense DesktopNow, which enabled user personalized settings to move seamlessly from virtual desktop to virtual desktop. "Once we really started to look at it, we also realized that there was much more we could do with AppSense beyond the virtual desktop," Bennett continues. "We pushed AppSense out to all our physical machines, which really helps us ensure that peoples' data is backed up and secure living in our SAN environment."

In addition, with users getting a personalized VDI experience, Round Rock could reduce its desktop estate. "Before AppSense we had a little over 800 machines," Pertob recalls. "We've been able to cut that to 400 now that users have embraced personalized virtual desktops."

Anytime, anywhere access to data

Next, Round Rock deployed AppSense DataNow to give employees greater access to data from any location regardless of where it resides. DataNow enables simple, secure access, sync and sharing of files, without data migration or new storage. It makes storage locations like file servers and Microsoft SharePoint easily accessible from any device. "When I showed DataNow to some people in our organization, they immediately said, 'I need that,'" comments Bennett. "That's when you know you have great technology."

To maintain a consistent Windows user experience, Round Rock used Windows folder redirection for the My Documents folder along with Microsoft's offline file functionality. "It didn't work well for us," Pertob points out. Sometimes it would update files; sometimes it wouldn't."

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To address the issue, Round Rock deployed DataNow to the majority of the city's laptops. "DataNow was the only technology we found that could solve the problem without changing the familiar user experience," emphasizes Pertob. "Users can interact with their My Documents folder the same way they always have while keeping all their data synced."

Even more impressive in Pertob's view was DataNow's multi-device flexibility. Users with Mac or Android devices can see the same mapped drives, including the My Documents folder, they use on their Windows desktop. "We never dreamed that was possible," says Pertob. "For example, if they take pictures on their iPhone, DataNow puts them in the My Pictures folder. It's amazing!"

Sync problems were a significant source of help desk tickets, but DataNow eliminated those problems. Even before DataNow had been installed on all Round Rock's machines, it had dropped trouble tickets from 15 per week to only 5. "Once we fully roll it out," notes Pertob, "I'm not expecting to have any tickets at all for that issue."

DataNow has also slashed the time it takes for a system restore. "To wipe and reload user data from a laptop before we had AppSense and DataNow took from four to six hours," Pertob elaborates. "And that's if you're just restoring data. If you're working on other issues as well, it could take a day or two to finish that." Now, it takes approximately an hour or less to wipe a system, deploy AppSense, and automatically sync the machine to its restore point. "With AppSense, you just set it up and when you come back it's done," Pertob marvels.

More effective IT means better citizen service

AppSense has helped the city improve its capacity to provide streamlined and efficient citizen service - an obligation it takes very seriously. "For corporations, knowing their customers is a challenge," observes Bennett. "But I can walk outside city hall and everyone around me is someone who is paying for the technology that we're putting in place."

The personnel who benefit from AppSense work throughout city government, from the police, fire, and parks and recreation departments to finance and administration. "They're in and out of meetings in different facilities. Wherever they logon, all their settings, everything is there, says Bennett. "They're getting the same experience as they would at their desks. "Divorcing user information from the physical machine makes lost productivity a thing of the past."

Preparing for the future

The City of Round Rock wants to put technologies in place that will prepare it for a next-generation workforce, while providing the best experience for its current employees. AppSense has already played a major role in the organization's effort to fine-tune its virtual desktop infrastructure. And when the city is ready to migrate from Windows 7 to Windows 10, Bennett is confident that the migration will go smoothly with AppSense.

"AppSense has been an excellent business partner," concludes Bennett. "Any municipal organization looking to roll out virtual desktop infrastructure needs to be looking at AppSense because it really helps take those environments to the next level."

About City of Round Rock, Texas

Located 15 miles north of Austin in Central Texas, Round Rock, Texas is the 31st largest city in Texas, with a population of approximately 100,000. Major employers include Dell, TECO-Westinghouse, Bass Pro Shops and Hospira.

About AppSense

AppSense is the global leader in user environment management (UEM) with over 3,500 enterprise customers worldwide that have deployed to over 7.5 million desktops. AppSense DesktopNow and DataNow enable IT teams to deliver the ultimate user experience and productivity across physical and virtual desktops while optimizing security and reducing operational and infrastructure costs. The company is headquartered in Sunnyvale, CA with offices around the world.