Education
McHenry County College

AppSense®

MCC
McHenry County College

AppSense helps McHenry County College scale IT smoothly to meet increased growth

Challenges

- Rapid growth in student enrollment and use of technology pushed the limits of the college's IT systems resulting in reduced performance of Active Directory roaming profile environment

- Need to deliver a consistent user experience, plus anywhere, anytime access to data and applications across supported platforms

Solution

- AppSense DesktopNow

Benefits

- Improved overall user experience

- Provided a customizable, consistent and efficient user experience that could be delivered anytime and anywhere across supported platforms

- Saved 500 man-hours per year from not having to resolve corrupt Active Directory roaming profiles

About McHenry County College

McHenry County College (MCC) offers a wide range of high-quality learning opportunities, enabling both traditional and adult students to meet their educational, career and personal goals close to home and at an affordable price. The College was founded in 1967, just two years after the community college system was established in Illinois in 1965. MCC provides both credit and non credit educational, professional and training opportunities, as well as special events for close to 60,000 participants annually.

The College serves one of the most rapidly growing counties in Illinois and offers six associate's degrees and 17 Associate of Applied Science degrees. MCC also offers free adult education (including ESL and literacy classes) and free GED and Spanish GED classes. MCC's main campus is located in Crystal Lake, IL and also has a satellite location center for corporate training and development located in McHenry, IL.

Situation

As Project Analyst, in the End User Services Department of Information Technology for McHenry County College (MCC), Allen Vaughn and his colleagues are responsible for ensuring that faculty, staff and students have access to the College's applications and data in an easy and convenient manner. Whether its college employees accessing email and documents on the network, or students working in a computer lab, End User Services strives to create the most positive user experience possible, similar to what users are accustomed to at home.

However, the rapid growth in student enrollment and use of technology at MCC in recent years pushed the limits of the college's IT systems, resulting in reduced performance of its Microsoft Active Directory roaming profile environment. This environment is used to manage individual user accounts and deliver script based drive mappings, printer mappings and as well as large numbers of Microsoft AD Group policies. This methodology resulted in typical login times for a Microsoft XP-based system ranging from two to five minutes with more extreme cases exceeding the 10-minute range.

In 2010, MCC spent 550 man-hours addressing a variety issues related to the Active Directory roaming profile environment, including corrupted profiles, mapping printers and repairing favorites among other problems. With over 1,000 employee accounts and close to 10,000 student accounts, MCC had simply outgrown the capabilities of the Microsoft solution.

Solving these issues, in addition to delivering anywhere, anytime access to data and applications required substantial internal and external coordination and support, provided by technology partners including Dell, RKON, Wyse and AppSense, with AppSense being the linch-pin for the entire project because of the solution's user virtualization that unlocks the user layer from devices, operating systems, and applications allowing IT to manage only a single instance of the user, thereby eliminating the arduous task of running unique configurations on every device.

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Allen Vaughn,
Project Analyst, MCC

Introduction to AppSense

The End User Services team was in the midst of the 3-year hardware refresh and was also facing a migration to Windows 7. They were beginning a desktop virtualization project as well, so the timing seemed right to combine these initiatives to deliver a higher quality experience for MCC users with the minimal amount of disruption.

Among the objectives they set out to accomplish were to:

1. Reduce the reliance on the Active Directory roaming profile environment which in turn would;
   - Decrease login and logout times
   - Reduce roaming profile domain and organizational unit policies forced on all computers
   - Reduce or eliminate Active Directory roaming profile corruptions and the associated time to mitigate these issues
   - Reduce or eliminate dependence on login or other supporting VBScripts

2. Improve the overall user experience

3. Provide a customizable, consistent and efficient user experience that could be delivered anytime and anywhere across supported platforms regardless of type: smartphone, tablet, laptop, thin client or traditional fat client.

To help MCC meet these objectives, they turned to RKON Technologies, an IT service provider, which identified AppSense as a major part of the solution. Since AppSense user virtualization manages the entire user experience across all desktop platforms, the IT team could standardize the build, automate desktop delivery, and easily migrate users to new desktops and Windows 7 while ensuring they receive a seamless, personalized, and predictable experience.

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AppSense benefits

MCC timed the operational deployment of AppSense to coincide with its Windows 7 migration, which was a major part of Vaughn's plan for user acceptance. One of the major benefits of this strategy was that the IT team could reestablish group policies within AppSense, since Windows 7 requires a new set of policies anyway, to create the most productive end-user experience possible. This ensured a faster, more efficient and flexible rollout by managing both the computer and user configuration attributes from one central management console. This console documents and displays the attributes of the computer and user configurations in a clear and concise way speeding the initial configuration as well as providing greater operational efficiencies past the initial implementation phase.

"When moving from XP to Windows 7, there are going to be changes for the user no matter how we deploy so we decided to bundle in an improved user experience with faster login and logout times with this migration," Vaughn said. Vaughn also states login times have been reduced from 2.5 minutes on average to approximately 15 seconds. "Assuming a user logs in and out once per day, that would be a savings of 270 seconds per user per day," he says. "Calculate 225 work days per year, per person and that adds up to 8,500 hours of savings. That alone is very powerful."

Using AppSense, Vaughn states MCC is realizing cost savings in the following three key areas:

1. Lower hardware costs by moving to a five-year refresh cycle versus the traditional three-year cycle of fat clients.

2. Lower software costs by reducing the tools necessary to provide a productive and consistent user experience.

3. An estimated reduction of 500 man-hours per year from not having to resolve corrupt Active Directory roaming profiles.

Future plans

MCC plans to embark on an initiative to bring desktop virtualization to its environment. "One of our president's goals is to make McHenry County College the best community college in the state of Illinois," said Vaughn. "In support of this goal, one of the IT department's goals is to provide anywhere anytime access to data and applications." Vaughn says that by deploying AppSense first, prior to commencing the desktop virtualization project, it will remove approximately 40-50 percent of the workload required to successfully complete the project.

About AppSense

AppSense is the global leader in User Environment Management (UEM) with over 3,000 enterprise customers worldwide that have deployed to over 7 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.