

»» Automating Manual Processes



Innovative and respected

University Hospital Birmingham (UHB) is one of the UK's largest and most innovative National Health Service (NHS) Trusts, and a highly respected teaching hospital. When it needed to migrate its network to Windows XP – a project in which downtime simply could not be tolerated – it chose LANDesk® Management Suite to help manage that migration.

UHB is comprised of two main hospitals: Queen Elizabeth and Selly Oak. These two sites are connected via Gigabit to form a single campus LAN running on Cisco* 6000 series switches. There are over 100 servers supporting 2,500 desktop PCs used by nearly 6,000 employees.

A need for change

With an increasing number of applications being deployed, IT Services – which is responsible for the network – realised that the lack of any up-to-date detailed inventory information would make it difficult, if not impossible, to plan and clearly identify the cost of migrating to a new platform. It would be even more difficult if important business applications were not supported under the new operating system. Furthermore, there was a lack of coherent integrated tools that could easily support developments and changes in the desktop environment.

When the hospital started the planning process for a complete migration of the network from Windows 95 to Windows XP, it was clear that a number of factors would have to be taken into account, including a need to baseline the network's inventory to discover what was suitable for migration and what wasn't. UHB also wanted to know the exact number of licences being used, and the actual applications that users had on their desktops.

Fit for vision

To assist in inventory management and migration, the hospital knew it needed new software tools. With a growing portfolio of new applications, the support team would be overwhelmed if it continued to manage users' desktops in the traditional way. Implementation of any management tool and the subsequent migration would have to be achieved with little or no impact on network performance or availability.

Business Needs

- Migration from non-standard Windows* 95 desktops to a standard Windows XP network in a sensitive environment

Solution

- LANDesk® Management Suite 8

Business Benefits

- Vastly improved inventory control, more efficient software distribution, and increased efficiency of the support team

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STEPHEN CHILTON

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL BIRMINGHAM

Following a rapid evaluation and proof of concept exercise on a number of different competing products, the hospital decided that the most comprehensive and integrated solution would be LANDesk Management Suite, together with additional partitioning software. Stephen Chilton, technical development manager at UHB, said: “We chose LANDesk Management Suite because it fits our vision of migration and ongoing support exceedingly well.”

Disaster recovery assurance

The complete migration process took 12 months from initial planning and proof of concept – including software testing, training and hardware changes – to the complete migration of the entire network to Windows XP. The implementation of LANDesk Management Suite and the partitioning software took only 16 days. Because of the sensitive nature of the network, a phased rollout of the new OS was necessary and LANDesk Management Suite made it possible to migrate individual sections of the network.

Full disaster recovery was in place: a separate partition was created on each machine, which LANDesk Management Suite then populated with the new image. This had two benefits. Firstly, the migration could occur locally, without having an impact on the network. Secondly, it allowed migration on a machine-by-machine basis, which could easily be reversed in case of error.

Automating manual processes

LANDesk Management Suite also allowed Chilton and his team to carry out a complete systems inventory of both hardware and software. This was extremely important because it was necessary to know which applications were resident and whether they could be ported to Windows XP. Previously, this would have been a manual process and a member of IT Services would have had to physically check each machine. With LANDesk Management Suite it was done automatically and quickly.

When non-standard applications were discovered, an agreed managed process was undertaken to evaluate the portability of the application. This included determining if the application was business-critical and whether it could be ported to XP, and further information was then obtained from the vendor. If the application was to be ported, it was subjected to rigorous testing in an applications lab to see how it ran under the new OS. Special taskforces were put in place for those applications that failed this, to see whether workarounds or alternative products could be found.

Process benefits

The implementation of LANDesk Management Suite has had a definite beneficial effect on IT Services’ processes since migration. “We were able to ensure that any software was always distributed in the same manner to the target machine, so this improved the quality of our installation work. It also gave us a firm foundation for providing ongoing desktop support,” said Chilton.

Before installing LANDesk Management Suite, Chilton’s team used tools that lacked integration. With LANDesk Management Suite, whole images can be distributed simultaneously and software updates can be delivered to target PCs – all driven by the up-to-date inventory.

This, as well as the ability to take control of users’ PCs remotely and solve problems more quickly, means that the team is now able to handle a larger amount of work and a higher number of calls than was previously possible: an extremely important consideration in a rapidly growing environment where downtime can affect patient treatment as well as money.

Powerful NHS reference

The UHB migration project has become a reference site for the use of LANDesk Management Suite. Other NHS Trusts see UHB as a technology trailblazer, and are asking Chilton for his advice. "We're more than willing to share our experiences and I'm beginning to disseminate the information, such as our processes, our roadmaps, and what we went through post-migration that we'd overlooked," he said.

Chilton goes on to emphasise the role that LANDesk Management Suite played in the process: "Without LANDesk Management Suite, we couldn't have achieved it. Well, perhaps we could have achieved it, but we'd probably still be working on it now!"

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LSI-0263 0704/JA/SH