



Thin Computers Fit With Taupo District Council's Strategy to Improve IT Services and Reduce Support Costs

Solution Architecture Number of Users

390 across 16 offices throughout New Zealand

Model

Wyse® Winterm™ 1200 LE thin clients

Wyse® Winterm™ 3125 thin clients

Wyse® Winterm™ V90 LE thin clients

Terminal Server OS

Microsoft® Windows® Server 2003

Network Used

TCP/IP networking on Microsoft

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For more Information on this Business Solution please call MPA on 09 570 2233

Council Overview

The Lake Taupo District region with its outstanding clean, green environment is one of the New Zealand's largest visitor destinations. The growing region has a diverse range of resources including forestry, agriculture, hydroelectric and geothermal energy, tourism, scenic and recreational attractions.

The Taupo District Council has readily adopted new technologies to achieve its business goals and looks for ways to improve its IT services to staff, businesspeople and residents. Its interactive web site is used by residents and visitors to access up-to-the-minute information about the district.

The Council's main system is supplied by Napier Computer Systems and includes the Intranet, financial systems, payroll, HR, resource and building consents, parking infringements, dog control, licensing, water meter billing, rating and land information. There is also a myriad of other applications such as GIS (mapping), document scanning, telemetry, library systems, visitor centre ticketing, venue booking system, landfill and infrastructural asset management, all essential to the delivery of services that Council has to provide the public.

Challenges

The Council has sixteen sites around the district's three main urban areas of Taupo, Turangi and Mangakino, all connected through a main network.

In the last two years, as new offices around the urban areas were opened there was an approximate 30% growth in number of PCs. This number accommodated for new staff, and additional PCs in meeting rooms and telemetry. The growth made it evident to the Council that a thin computing infrastructure was required to reduce its total cost of ownership in desktop maintenance.

Ageing operating systems and desktops

In March 2005 the Council was operating 340 PCs. Approximately 120 of these were running ageing operating systems including Microsoft® Windows® 95 and 98, causing users to encounter ongoing problems with accessing the network.

A portion of the 120 PCs were over a decade old and overdue for replacement. According to Kylee Mills, Systems Administrator for the Taupo District Council, "Network cards were constantly dying and we were experiencing all sorts of problems with the hardware."

IT support team resources under pressure

To accommodate for the rising number of PCs and the desktop support they required, the Council contemplated having to expand its team of two IT network staff.

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“Maintaining the desktops was chewing up valuable IT team support time as it was,” said Ms Mills. “We needed to reduce desktop maintenance and free up IT staff to focus on strategic projects” she said.

Time consuming software upgrades

It was estimated that 60% of the IT team’s time was dedicated to the ongoing maintenance of the desktops and this percentage increased when it came to software upgrades.

On average, five software upgrades were carried out annually by the IT team for upgrades and security updates. The lack of a centralised network required each desktop to be manually updated by the IT specialists. Physically visiting each site for the upgrades was a time consuming and costly exercise.

Growing inconsistency of applications leading to security vulnerability

Desktop users typically installed any programs they bought into the office environment. The lack of a centralised environment made it difficult for IT personnel to identify which applications were on the desktops. It also created additional configuration, upgrade and support costs and left the Council more vulnerable to security threats with unapproved software installed.

Why Wyse Thin Computers Were Selected

The Council decided that replacing the existing PCs with desktops would be an expensive option, with the long term investment costs of installing all the required applications for each desktop and the ongoing maintenance support and upgrades.

“After a review with other Councils and consulting with our IT suppliers Napier Computer Systems, the Wyse Winterm were chosen” said Ms Mills.

Initially the Council purchased two thin computers which were installed randomly around its main office for testing. Following the successful take up by users, the Council has continued to purchase Wyse thin computers to replace leased PCs as they expire and for new users as required.

Desktops PCs that run scanners, cameras and other digital devices are being replaced with Wyse thin clients, which run on a Microsoft Windows XP Embedded (XPe) operating system.

Centralised administration and remote support brings greater control

The Wyse thin clients provide a remote desktop connection to the Council’s terminal servers, allowing for centralised administration. Updates are carried out through the server, giving users instant access to the updates and new programs.

“If support is required we now have the ability through the Wyse thin computers for remote management,” said Ms. Mills. “The user’s session can be viewed as an administrator on the server and their problems addressed remotely within minutes,” said Ms Mills. “This also applies to configuration and upgrades.”

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Maintenance time slashed from 55% to 5%

The Council has freed up an estimated 55% of support time for the IT team. "Maintenance for the Wyse thin computers is impressively low, at the most 5%," said Ms Mills. "We are taking great steps forward in our strategic IT plans rather than dedicating time to get things to work."

With virtually no time tied up in hardware support, IT staff can manage the servers, the security of the network upgrades and set up new sites around the district without additional staff required.

Speed and design of Winterm received well by users

"Users were a little skeptical of losing their CD ROM drives," said Ms Mills. "Once the Wyse thin computers were rolled out, the smart design and fast loading speed to log on and download information won over users."

Wyse thin computers have also been placed in each office for the public to check their rating information.

Installation done in-house and within minutes

The IT team did not require any outside expertise with setting up the Wyse thin computers. Ms. Mills found they were simple to install, from the box to operation within a few minutes, so no impact on user's time.

"Replacing the thin clients is just as efficient as all data and windows profiles are stored on the server" said Ms Mills.

Reduced replacement costs

The Council has projected that Wyse thin computers life will far exceed that of the desktop, well beyond five years – providing a long term, stable and reliable environment to work in.

Looking Forward - the promise of the Wyse Winterm

The IT team sees great potential in the Wyse Winterm V90 to enhance the productivity for the Council's remote users. Currently the notebooks for thirty remote users require updating and servicing and the security of information stored on them is paramount.

Supporting a range of add-on hardware peripherals and with a PCMCIA slot, the Council proposes to use T3G wireless internet cards in the Wyse Winterm V90s to become remote access devices.

For users, this would do away with carrying around a notebook and just require plugging the lightweight Winterm V90 into any site and instantly accessing the Council's system.