AXESS
SYSTEMS

Removing the guesswork from a major IT purchase

Brewers needed to make a large investment in new IT technology, but with so many vendors to choose from how could they be confident they would choose the best one for their business?

Over the years, the success of Brewers meant they had outgrown their IT systems and branches were enduring an increasingly poor experience. Plans to improve the in-branch customer experience by streaming training and demonstration videos in to the branches would not be possible until this performance issue was resolved.

Also of concern was the fact they were using Microsoft 2003. As this was no longer supported by Microsoft, Brewers were keen to effect a change to remove this risk.

Would Citrix be a wise Investment?

Because of the large financial investment needed to upgrade the entire network, Brewers had to be sure the new IT infrastructure was able to cope with user demands for several years to come.

Whilst Microsoft was the existing platform, and the one they were familiar with, questions were raised as to whether it was still going to be the best option for Brewers in the future.

In discussions with Axess Systems, James Cawthorne, the IT operations manager at Brewers, shortlisted two platforms. He felt both Microsoft and Citrix could meet Brewers' requirements.

From the budgetary information obtained, Citrix was more expensive, but would this additional investment provide additional benefits over Microsoft.

What James needed was a way to compare the two platforms in Brewers' own environment and see first-hand if Citrix would justify its higher price.

Brewers
DECORATOR CENTRES

Brewers decorator centres are the UK's largest independent decorator's merchant, supporting a network of more than 150 branches, mainly in the south of England.

THE BENEFITS

Working with Axess Systems to design their new IT environment gave Brewers several advantages:

- They were able to run an on-site PoC designed to their requirements.

- The PoCs were built from loan kit and ran 'live' in several branches to provide real performance data.

- The results of the PoC gave Brewers complete confidence in the system design.

- James received real conclusive evidence for his case to the board.

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A Proof of Concept to Provide Real Performance Data

At this point James brought in Axess Systems to design and install a Proof of Concept (PoC) to test both options. The PoC would be implemented across several of Brewers' offices and branches to demonstrate the two platforms side-by-side.

The Proof of Concept allowed Brewers to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the pros and cons of the Microsoft and Citrix platforms.

Using evaluation hardware Axess Systems secured from its chosen hardware vendor, the PoC allowed James to evaluate the new hardware would form part of the proposed solutions.

Brewers ran both PoC systems for several months with some of the branches using them 'live' to provide real performance data for both platforms.

At the end of the PoC, Axess Systems presented a comprehensive report to Brewers that detailed all of the findings, detailing how each system had performed.

For Brewers, the PoC provided convincing evidence that Citrix was the best fit for their business. It proved to be more flexible, made management tasks easier and gave an improved user experience.

"When designing a new IT system there is often a tendency to over-specify what you need so you can be sure it will deliver on expectations. Because of our plans to enable e-learning and video steaming at our branches, the option to include graphic accelerator cards needed to be considered.

By undertaking a Proof of Concept we were able to not only evaluate two different platforms but crucially, we demonstrated the performance in the stores would be significantly improved without the dedicated graphic cards. We saved money and simplified the design and deployment of the solution by using actual data gathered from our sites and infrastructure rather than assumption and guesswork"

James Cawthorne,
IT operations manager at C Brewer & Sons Ltd

700 Dell D90s Complete the Solution

As part of the PoC, Brewers were able to test and compare different thin clients. Based on price and performance the Dell D90 was chosen and Brewers bought 700 units from Axess Systems.

Dell D90 Thin Client