

“Our office migration provided us with the perfect opportunity to think again about how we managed our desktop estate,” said Chris Petrie, IT Manager, Stephenson Harwood. “With RES Software, we were able to move to a single master image for all our desktops, and then personalize each machine based on the applications and user settings that the individual requires. This approach meant that we could achieve a seamless migration for our users, as well as deliver long-term cost efficiencies through better desktop management.”

Stephenson Harwood Moves To Managed Desktops With RES Software

Overview

Stephenson Harwood is a full service international law firm with more than 100 partners and 600 staff worldwide. With offices spread across Europe and Asia, the firm represents clients in the banking, energy and utilities markets. It has been active in the global banking and finance sectors since it was originally founded in 1875, and is particularly strong in China, where 25 per cent of the company’s staff are located.

Situation

The law firm was moving its UK headquarters to a new office location in London. A move of this kind meant that a large amount of planning and preparation was required so that fee-earning staff would be able to work smoothly through the transition. Chris Petrie, IT director at Stephenson Harwood, was responsible for this migration taking place and moving over around 600 desktops to the new office.

Prior to the move, Stephenson Harwood relied on

existing tools like Group Policy to control and manage desktop settings and user settings; however, this was proving unreliable. “Working with Group Policy, we were seeing similar problems with user settings time and again. The same fixes would have to be applied to different users, which added up to time spent firefighting rather than on long-term business value. We therefore took the opportunity to see how we could make our desktops perform better and improve their reliability too,” said Petrie.

Solution

As part of his planning, Petrie considered solutions that would split user settings and personalization details away from the physical desktop and operating system. This would allow the company’s staff to work more flexibly and reduce the management overhead that each machine required. This would go alongside Petrie and his team building a new standard desktop image for the company that would provide faster performance and lower support requirements.

“As part of this move, we decided to look at how we could implement an updated single software image and improve the management of our desktops across the company. Aside from moving all of our users across to the new location and minimizing the business impact that this would have, we also saw this as an opportunity to incorporate a host of improvements into the image and to reduce the amount of time spent on day-to-day desktop management tasks. We could use the HQ move as a way to make our desktop management strategy deliver greater benefits to the organization in the longer term.”



In order to handle the management of user settings, Petrie chose RES Dynamic Desktop Studio. Dynamic Desktop Studio is made up of RES Workspace Manager and RES Automation Manager, allowing for desktop composition and personalization, security, service orchestration and administration; together they provide customers with a complete solution for managing a user’s desktop session independent of the physical machine that they are using.

For Stephenson Harwood, the Desktop Sampler technology in RES Workspace Manager was used to collect user personalization data ahead of the move. This provided Petrie and his team with a complete list of all the applications that users had installed, what settings they had within those applications, and also how these applications and short-cuts were set up on the user’s machine. The team then created a new standard company desktop image that would have the individual user settings applied to it dynamically when the user logs in.



“With RES Software, we can deploy our standard corporate desktop image to a machine, and then apply that user’s personal settings and applications to that image. They get the short-cuts, set-up and applications that they require in order to be productive at whatever machine they are using at the time,” explained Petrie. “As this can be deployed ‘on-demand’, users can work across different desktops in the office depending on what they are doing at the time.”

Stephenson Harwood’s desktops now consist of a mixture of different platforms that meet the needs of staff that are using them, from standard physical PCs through to virtual desktops based on VMware and Quest vWorkspace. RES Dynamic Desktop Studio automatically assigns the user’s settings and applications to the desktop session as it is started, so that the user gets their personal desktop experience whatever device they happen to be using at the time.

During the project, Petrie worked closely with Virtual Engine, one of the leading desktop virtualization consultancies in the UK and an expert provider of solutions based on RES Software. This joint work was instrumental to the success of the project, as Virtual Engine could ensure that any issues were resolved quickly and did not affect the wider office migration work. “I cannot overstate our appreciation of the work done by Ian Brighton and his team, we had an aggressive time table and had set the quality bar high, I am very grateful for the way Ian, Nathan, Simon and the team from RES Software dug in and delivered,” said Petrie.

Benefit

The immediate return for Stephenson Harwood was around the completion of the company’s office move with no discernible downtime for users. “We moved users over to the new office over the course of three weekends. Thanks to the preparation work that we had done, there were no issues reported by staff when they first logged in on the Monday mornings following the move. RES Software made the whole project run much more smoothly compared to just lifting and dropping desktops from one site to another,” commented Petrie.

In the long term, Petrie expects to see further return on investment from the deployment of Dynamic Desktop Studio. “This implementation was designed to provide users with more flexible and reliable desktop environments as well as to make it easier for IT to support the desktop. We are also looking to reduce the amount of time that the IT team has to spend on basic IT problems; with RES Software, we are achieving that aim, giving us more time to concentrate on supporting business objectives through the use of technology.”

Future Plans

Stephenson Harwood is to move to Windows 7 by the end of 2011, and RES Dynamic Desktop Studio will play a vital role in how this project is managed. “Because we already have the user settings and personalisation data separate from the desktop and OS, the job of migrating users will be easier to control,” explained Petrie. “We have a far better understanding of our users preferences and a documented list of every application users have installed and are using, which helps enormously with planning the transition and our priorities.”

As an organization, Stephenson Harwood is planning to extend the use of RES Software to its other offices as well, according to Petrie. “We want to provide the same a consistent corporate desktop experience to users whatever office they are in and whatever device they are using to access their applications. This makes a big difference to our users, and to the IT team as well,” he concluded.

About RES Software

RES Software, the proven leader in dynamic desktop solutions, is driving a transformation in the way organizations manage, maintain and reduce the cost of their desktop infrastructure. The RES Software award-winning, patented products enable IT professionals to manage and deliver secure, personalized and compliant desktops independent of the underlying computing infrastructure – thin clients, virtual desktops, physical desktops, or server-based computing environments. The company empowers customers, from small to medium-sized businesses to global enterprises, to reduce desktop complexity and meet the essential needs of a dynamic workforce that requires on-demand access to their personalized workspaces. For more information, follow updates on Twitter @RESSoftware and visit www.ressoftware.com.