

Overview

Many Norwegian municipalities collaborate with joint IT departments to deliver services. Advantages of this model include better use of available resources, a bigger and more stimulating environment for IT staff, the ability to deliver better services to employees and the public, and an improved ability to solve mandatory obligations set forth by legislators.

The five municipalities Tynset, Alvdal, Tolga, Folldal og Rendalen established joint IT-infrastructure in 2004. These are small communities in rural parts of Norway, and the region is called Fjellregionen (Mountain Region). These municipalities have a similar history and a legacy built on agriculture and mining, and today are modern societies with rich culture and advanced businesses.

The Challenge

Norwegian municipalities are faced with an increasing number of tasks and services they need to deliver, only using available resources and tight IT budgets — a key reason for many joining forces. Fjellregionen realized that they would get more value and better ability to deliver quality services through collaboration.

The biggest challenge with running such IT departments is that many users with unique needs are scattered around hundreds of locations, everything from administrative staff at the main offices to employees within National Health Service and Children's Care that handle sensitive data with strict rules to IT security.

Additionally, limited resources both in terms of money and staff make it difficult to support a 24/7 operation at many locations scattered across geographical distances.

The Solution

The municipality opted for a solution that is becoming very well known within the Norwegian public sector. It includes using application virtualization from Citrix to centralize all services and applications in a central server farm. From this, 1200 users receive services delivered over networks to their location and their device. In the user environments, there are a good mix of thin clients, some thick, and laptops running on different versions of Windows XP and 7. About 200-300 applications are stored on IBM servers that are virtualized with VMware. The users receive applications delivered to two different zones, based on security levels and which permissions they have. All users that handle sensitive data log on to a secure zone. Such an

environment is enough to concern anyone with knowledge into the complexity of administrating IT-environments.

"It became evident early on that we needed a good framework to administrate the user environment. We were in need of an easier process to handle users, and to assign settings, configurations and to handle printers," said Geir Løkken ICT-advisor at the municipality of Tynset.

"In the evaluation between RES Software and AppSense we concluded that

Workspace Manager was much better suited to solve our challenges," he said.

“We would have needed twice as many staff in the IT department had it not been for RES Workspace Manager. The software manages all parts of the user environment and, together with our terminal servers, it is the reason for us being able to deliver the services we are required to provide. We have never considered replacing RES Software, and it's more likely that we will invest further in their solutions”

— Geir Løkken, ICT-Advisor



Feature Rich

RES Workspace Manager allows the IT department to deliver dynamic desktops where all user settings are integrated and adapted to the needs of each individual. All this without the hassle of scripts, roaming profiles and complex policies. Unlike competing solutions, the focus is on the user —not the device — and the IT department maintains centralized insight and control. This yields benefits for all parties. Fjellregionen IKT runs the latest version of the software.

"We use Workspace Manager to distribute applications to published desktops. From the user interface we control what apps need to be delivered to the various users, and what permissions and settings they need." This simplifies administration of file mappings, catalogues, user groups and printer set up, according to Løkken.

"We can also analyze all user logins and events in the network. The tool is excellent for troubleshooting and for analyzing user behavior. This ensures better use of available resources and that they are spent where they are most needed."

Other advantages for the IT department are automatic documentation and control over license usage.

Increased Security

Løkken claims that the security aspects of RES Software are amongst the features he is most happy about.

"Workspace Manager controls what users can and cannot access, ensuring that no unauthorized apps or functions are allowed



to run within the IT environment. This gives us better stability and less risk. We are very pleased with the level of accessibility and stability we deliver,” he said.

Employees at municipalities must have access to a lot of sensitive data about their citizens, especially within health care and family services. All these users’ IT services are delivered to a secure zone. Workspace Manager simplifies the administration of this, since all permissions and restrictions are handled centrally. Also, given that all data is on servers and only authorized personnel can access it, the risk of losing sensitive information is reduced.

“Our users receive the services and applications they need and are not feeling restricted or controlled. They have worked under this system for so many years that they are used to it, and they understand why it has to be this way. They get access to what they are supposed to during business hours, and nothing else,” said Løkken.

Easy Migration to Win7

Some users have been equipped with Windows 7. Given that all user profiles already were managed with Workspace Manager, the migration process was easy and straightforward like any other everyday task. Users receive their packages containing the new OS. It’s simple and easy, with no hassle for the IT experts or the users. Projects that could take up to one year are solved without any complications.

“We actually don’t have migration processes, as it makes no difference to us what device the user has. All profiles and applications are stored on the server and are delivered as services to the users where they are located. They can freely move between locations and get the same access and functionality.”

The good procedures, routines and results have been noticed externally:

“Other municipalities are considering joining our infrastructure since they believe that we can deliver better service than they can receive from an external service

provider. We feel that we deliver very good services with limited resources.”

Fjellregionen IKT has started a test project with RES Automation Manager. This is intended to simplify changes in the user environment.

“We believe we have a lot to gain from automating manual tasks, as well as the new self-service functionality in the newest version of the software. When users can get permissions to place orders for apps or services that their managers can approve, we will free up a lot of time in the IT department. This time can be used to develop new functionality and services,” he said.

That Løkken and Fjellregionen are satisfied with their Citrix farm and solutions from RES Software is evident.

“We had never managed before RES Workspace Manager. The alternative would be to double the number of employees in the IT department. It’s not an option to run this department without this solution, and we would never try to either.”

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.