

Overview

Nisa-Today's is the UK's leading member-owned organization, providing benefits to independent retailers and wholesalers in food and drink markets, with a turnover in excess of £1bn and a £5.75bn wholesale buying arm. The mutual group is entirely owned by its trading members and represents 5,000 stores and 270 wholesalers across the UK (including Northern Ireland) and the Channel Islands.

Nisa-Today's is supported by a centralized buying, marketing and distribution system, operating from the organization's Member Support Centre headquartered in Scunthorpe, with an ambient operation in the same location and two temperature-controlled depots in Stoke-on-Trent and Harlow. This group also provides its members with full central office back-up incorporating cutting-edge ordering systems and planogram services for store merchandising. The Member Support Centre team requires access to these systems at all times and will field, on average, 350 member enquiries a day.

The Challenge: Supporting Secure Access to Applications While Lowering IT Operating Costs

As a mutual group, keeping central operation costs, including IT, as low as possible is a top business priority. Nisa-Today's wanted to reduce the cost of managing its desktop environment by 25% but did not want to affect the productivity of its 195 users based at the Member Support Centre.

Trevor Guerin, IT Outsourcing Manager, looked for a solution that would allow many of the company's desktop support tasks to be centralized and automated, allowing it to drive down the cost of managing its user environment. At the same time, Nisa-

Today's wanted to provide tighter security around user access.

One of the biggest challenges for IT is controlling the cost and security of the desktop. From configuration to application deployment, the investment of time and resource needed to maintain application access is considerable with a PC environment.

"Our IT support function was consumed by firefighting individual desktop issues. We wanted to reduce this so that we could more tightly control the cost of operations and free up more of our time to focus on innovation," said Guerin. "We also wanted to enhance security across our IT operations. To do this we needed to restrict the openness of the PCs installed without taking away any functionality for the user."

Working with its IT services partner, SquareOne, Nisa-Today's selected RES Software Workspace Manager and Automation Manager as desktop and infrastructure management solutions.

RES Workspace Manager provides Nisa-Today's with a powerful workspace management solution that allows the organisation to have full control over user access regardless of whether applications are installed locally on the PC or delivered virtually from the data centre. Since its installation, Workspace Manager has automated 30% of the core desktop

maintenance tasks. To provide this level of automation in any other way would have taken the use of multiple software and network management products. With Workspace Manager, the deployment of software updates and reconfiguration of desktops, which used to take days can

now be handled in seconds from a single console. The team has been able to reduce the time it spends in the field fire fighting desktop problems by 25%.



In addition to being able to deploy software updates up to 10 times faster, Nisa-Today's has also increased security around the desktop by managing where users can save their data and controlling what can be downloaded.

"Before users would save to their hard drives, which increased the risk of data loss if anything happens to the desktop hardware," commented Darren Scarratt, Nisa-Today's Network Manager. "With RES Workspace Manager, we can ensure that users save directly to the central drives which are automatically backed up."

Another challenge that has been addressed by Workspace Manager is the downloading of unauthorised software. Scarratt explained, "Users will inevitably follow dialogue popups when a software update is needed. The risk is that unauthorized software is downloaded or creates a conflict with the installed software. With RES, we can avoid this situation happening as it intercepts to ensure that software updates are automatically administered and rolled-out to all users. This is a plus point not only for the IT team but for the user too."

"One of the biggest benefits of using Workspace Manager, one that is visible to our Member Support Centre team, is the ability for users to work from any machine and still have access to their own personal settings," added Scarratt. "Before if a user's PC was down, they were out of action until the desktop was fixed, which affected productivity. Now, in the event of a desktop problem they can easily move to a free workstation, logging on to use their own applications."

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Greater Control Over IT Assets

With Workspace Manager, Nisa-Today's has greater control over IT asset management and compliance reporting. The software allows the company to track the use of its software licenses. By monitoring actual usage patterns and auditing their existing software, Nisa-Today's has reduced licensing costs by 10 - 15%.

RES Automation Manager enables Nisa-Today's to minimize the time spent on both recurring and unique changes to desktops and servers. RES Automation Manager offers a uniform solution to routine but complex tasks. Labor intensive changes that normally take hours are now completed automatically in seconds from a single console. RES Automation Manager takes minutes to install on the administrator's workstation. From there, it can be deployed quickly across the network to all the Microsoft workstations and servers in the organisation, regardless of location. Nisa-Today's can orchestrate the roll out of Operating System updates, patches, hot fixes and install/uninstall applications network-wide, and provide

easy scheduling of registry setting modifications, service changes, event log monitoring and disk space usage.

“One of the biggest benefits of using RES Workspace Manager and Automation Manager is the ability for our technical specialists to manage Nisa-Today's user and server environments from anywhere. This capability was particularly invaluable when one of our senior members of the team couldn't be based in the office for several months and had to work from home. It would have been a real challenge to find a temporary cover with the skills and level of knowledge we needed. With RES, we can manage the entire user environment remotely, which enabled our senior team member to work as she would in the office from home.”

Managing Fat, Thin and Virtual Infrastructures

Automation Manager also supports the company's IT consolidation plans, which have been accelerated using server virtualization. The company has virtualized

its entire server environment using VMware and uses Automation Manager to deploy client applications from its virtual servers in a few hours. Before Automation Manager was installed, this process took days to complete.

Nisa-Today's sees its RES Workspace Manager and Automation Manager management system as integral to the development of its IT infrastructure. Its ability to manage user and server environments regardless of whether computing models being deployed are fat, thin or virtual, provides the company with flexibility around the technology choices it makes. Nisa-Today's knows that it has the ability to have single point control regardless of how it evolves its computing environment.

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.