Biztech INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Search...   ◉ BizTech ○ CDW

Case Studies

Tactical Advice

Resources

Security | Storage | Infrastructure Optimization | Networking | Mobile | Hardware & Software | Management

f Like 87

Is It Time to Phase Out PCs and Embrace Thin Clients?

Businesses say goodbye to PCs and turn to thin-client workstations to save money, energy and time.

by John Edwards (/author/john-edwards)   posted **Aug 24, 2011**
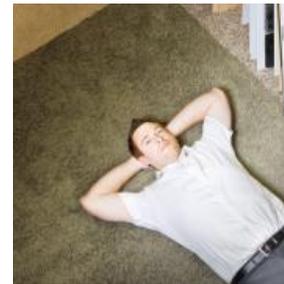
f Like   Tweet 7   ✉

For General Floor, a Bellmawr, N.J., flooring wholesaler, the PC era is already over. Last year, as the company looked for a flexible and efficient way of providing computer services to its branch sites, it focused its attention on thin clients — bare-bones, no-frills workstations.

"We're phasing out PCs," says Matthew Petolicchio, General Floor's IT manager. "It doesn't make sense to waste money and effort on processing and storage resources that users don't really need, so we decided to go another route."

A thin client is a basic desktop workhorse that features a modest processor (usually in the 1.2 gigahertz to 1.5GHz range) and just enough memory and display support to enable fast and seamless interaction with a central network server, which shoulders most of the computing burden. **A thin client usually doesn't include any storage capabilities, because all user applications and data reside on the server.**

Michael McDonald, a senior associate at technology research firm AMI-Partners, says that several trends have combined to accelerate the move toward thin clients. "Lower costs, particularly in IT support and energy, are drawing more small and midsize businesses to thin clients," he says. He also notes that thin-client security and reliability are convincing more companies to make the switch (http://www.biztechmagazine.com/article/2011/05/zero-client-diet) . "Businesses are looking to thin clients to cut down on service calls," he adds.

Matthew Petolicchio of General Floor saved money and reduced management headaches with thin clients.

Credit Ryan Donnell/Aurora Select

Thin Clients Generate Savings Growth

While thin clients usually cost less than stand-alone PCs, Petolicchio notes that thin client adopters shouldn't expect to reap massive cost savings up front. "It's maybe 15 or 20 percent cheaper to buy a thin client than a desktop computer," he says. **But long-term savings generated in several areas, including reliability, longevity and enhanced security, add up over time.**

The technology's reputation for outstanding reliability was a big draw for General Floor, which is in the process of deploying HP thin clients (http://www.cdw.com/shop/products/HP-Thin-Client-t5325-1.2-GHz/1937793.aspx) at 20 locations in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. Petolicchio notes that with fewer critical parts to break down or wear out, a bare-bones thin client can run reliably for up to 10 years, about twice as long as a traditional PC. "The hard drives, mother-boards, video cards — all that stuff dies; plus it all takes up a lot more power," he says.

Thin clients are also less prone to obsolescence, because nearly all of the sophisticated technology is concentrated at the server. Locating the most temperamental technology at the server also reduces the need for client troubleshooting calls. "The thin client is eliminating a lot of overhead we had to deal with before with desktop computers," Petolicchio says. "We're not spending all our time cleaning up viruses and updating the OS."

Thin Clients Require Less Management

Petolicchio also likes the way thin clients can be centrally managed with minimal effort. "We can remotely connect and support all these thin clients, which we couldn't do before," he says. "If a user gets stuck in an e-mail or an application, we can connect to their system and help them out."

BizTechQuickPoll

The ability to solve problems as soon as they arise allows General Floor to keep its thin client users working productively and eliminates costly and time-consuming site visits. "It's been a breeze," Petolicchio says. Joe Steele, IT director for Atlanta law firm Weissman Nowack Curry

& Wilco, estimates that [Wyse Technology thin clients (http://www.biztechmagazine.com/article/2010/11/wyse-e01-zero-client)](http://www.biztechmagazine.com/article/2010/11/wyse-e01-zero-client) have lowered his organization's support and administrative expenses by at least 70 percent.

The technology has cleared the way for a more flexible and productive workplace. There's no need to configure and customize individual workstations, because employees access all of their applications and data at the server. "The setup of new users [and] the setup of users moving from office to office has been 90 percent easier," Steele says.

Many businesses are also attracted to thin clients' security attributes. Eliminating internal storage devices and user-accessible ports makes it all but impossible for a user to steal data, conduct sabotage or accidentally download malware onto the system. "You're absolutely more secure in a thin client infrastructure," McDonald says.

Fred Haberberger, chief information officer of Skowhegan Savings Bank in Skowhegan, Maine, says his employees love the technology. "The thin clients boot in seconds rather than minutes, and, since we are utilizing the resources on the server, the applications that they depend on run faster as well."

Skowhegan recently switched from a traditional PC environment to 152 Wyse thin clients, helped by funds from Efficiency Maine, a state initiative to promote more efficient electricity use.

Getting Started with Thin Clients

Haberberger advises thin client adopters to plan their deployments carefully, because the infrastructure will be around for a very long time and will have to adapt to evolving technologies and business needs. **It's important to work closely with a system integrator to address both current and anticipated needs.**

"Be patient when designing the deployment, since you're building the entire foundation of the system," Haberberger says.

Businesses also need to assure their employees that thin clients aren't a step down or backward from existing PC technology. "Educate and communicate with end users throughout the entire process," Haberberger advises.

A growing number of business IT experts and adopters feel that thin clients represent tomorrow's end-user IT model. "Businesses are just beginning to understand the potential," McDonald says.

Steele, like many others, believes that most businesses will eventually recognize the benefit of switching to thin clients. "I think the day is coming when everyone is going to have a thin client," he says.

👍 Like 👎   1 person liked this.   👥 (#) **DISQUS** ▾

Add New Comment   Login (#)

Showing 0 comments   Sort by newest first ⇕

✉ Subscribe by email (#)   🔊 RSS (http://biztechmagazine.disqus.com/is_time_to_phase_out_pcs_and_embrace_thin_clients/latest.rss)

Trackback URL   http://disqus.com/forum

performance can make or break a business, so make sure your network is doing the...

Smart Firewalls Equal Smarte... | Businesses see the security benefits of next-generation firewall technology.

Find the Holes in Your Netwo... | Stay a few steps ahead of hackers and malware with Tenable Security's effective Nessus...

is saving businesses time, money and space that is otherwise spent on...

Smart Firewalls Equal Smarte... | Businesses see the security benefits of next-generation firewall technology.

5 Steps for Building a Busin... | If you're feeling uncertain about building a business continuity plan, make sure to...

way to reach the cloud. SMBs share their strategies and experiences...

Is It Time to Phase Out PCs... | Businesses are realizing the value and savings of a thin client infrastructure.

Certified Cloud – BizTech Qu... | A university has launched a certificate program for cloud computing, there's a rise in...

Networking   + more

Get the Most Out of Your Net... | Network performance can make or break a business, so make sure your network is doing the...

Dr. Tattoff Has No VoIP Regr... | As a growing tattoo removal company, Dr. Tattoff made the decision to upgrade to VoIP to...

Review: F5 Big-IP Local Traf... | This capable F5 appliance runs on a virtual machine rather than physical hardware.

Mobile & Wireless   + more

Get the Most Out of Your Net... | Network performance can make or break a business, so make sure your network is doing the...

How iPads Are Changing Busin... | Apple's iPad is increasing productivity and changing the way businesses work.

Gristedes Bags Success with... | This New York-based grocery store chain deployed a wireless LAN solution and reaped...

Hardware & Software   + more

Is It Time to Phase Out PCs... | Businesses are realizing the value and savings of a thin client infrastructure.

The Benefits of Digital Docu... | Going paperless is saving businesses time, money and space that is otherwise spent on...

What's the Word on Operating... | Mango, the latest version of Microsoft's mobile OS Windows Phone 7, has been released to...