Capgemini Achieves Faster Desktop Upgrades with Automated Deployment

Overview

Country: Canada
Industry: IT Consulting

Customer Profile
With 60,000 employees in 30 countries and 2004 global revenues of €6.3 billion, Paris-based Capgemini is a leading IT solutions and consulting provider and a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner.

Business Situation
Executives with the outsourcing arm of Capgemini Canada wanted to add automated desktop deployment to their service offering and needed a way to develop and demonstrate competence in the practice.

Solution
Capgemini used the Microsoft® Solution Accelerator for Business Desktop Deployment (Zero Touch) to automate an upgrade of the Microsoft Windows® XP Professional operating system to 500 desktops.

Benefits
- Faster deployment
- Savings of 25%
- Investment payback in 4 months
- Satisfied user base

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Perry Stoneman, Vice President of Sales and Delivery, Capgemini Canada

Executives at Capgemini, one of the world's top five providers of IT solutions and services, wanted to add automated desktop deployment to the outsourcing services the company offers to its thousands of customers worldwide. To demonstrate competence in the practice, the company implemented a pilot project that used the Microsoft® Solution Accelerator for Business Desktop Deployment, Enterprise Edition, also known widely as Zero Touch, to deliver an upgrade of the Microsoft Windows® XP Professional operating system to 500 desktops in an internal division of the company. The pilot was enormously successful, delivering upgrades faster, with a smaller team, and with a zero failure rate—for an overall cost savings of 25 percent. Now, Capgemini is making automated desktop deployment a part of its regular outsourcing offering.

Microsoft Windows xp **Professional**

Situation

Capgemini, one of the world's foremost providers of consulting, information technology, and outsourcing services, uses the power of collaboration to help businesses implement growth strategies, leverage technology, and thrive. In its Outsourcing Services group, the company is contractually obligated to reduce costs for its customers, and one such cost involves desktop deployment and support. A critical requirement is to implement operating-system upgrades within organizations that depend on the uninterrupted operation of hundreds or thousands of client computers supporting IT professionals and other knowledge workers.

Because of this requirement, the practice of automated desktop deployment has developed a growing appeal for Capgemini outsourcing executives. "We are continually seeking ways to help customers reduce the operating expenses of deploying and supporting client computers, particularly in distributed environments," explains Perry Stoneman, Vice President of Sales and Delivery at Capgemini Canada. "We wanted to find a way we could develop and demonstrate a competence in automated desktop deployment so as to make it one of our central offerings."

Toward this end, executives decided to implement a pilot project in the Toronto Service Delivery Centre, a division of Capgemini Canada formed initially for the purpose of managing IT and business process outsourcing services for utilities and other power-generation customers. The objective was to upgrade 500 client computers from the Microsoft® Windows® 2000 operating system to the Microsoft Windows XP Professional operating system Service Pack 1. The computers—90 percent desktop and 10 percent portable—were located in three main offices and seven smaller ones throughout the Toronto area and connected through a Fast Ethernet wide-area network.

Solution

In deciding on a technology for implementing automated desktop deployment, Capgemini wasted no time in choosing a Microsoft-based approach, namely, the Microsoft Solution Accelerator for Business Desktop Deployment, also known widely as Microsoft Zero Touch. Capgemini Portfolio Manager Pat Kassabian explains. "We have done dozens of operating-system upgrades and have experimented with a number of technologies to simulate automated desktop deployment, but typically these endeavors required patching two or three products together," he says. "For this project, we wanted to use a fully integrated solution, and a number of factors led us directly to Microsoft Zero Touch."

Kassabian and other Capgemini Outsourcing Services executives—as well as many of their customers—were already familiar with Microsoft Systems Management Server (SMS) 2003, one of the major elements of Zero Touch. They were also enthusiastic participants in the Microsoft Technology Adoption Program. In addition, the executives were especially impressed by two features within Microsoft Zero Touch: (1) the Microsoft SMS 2003 Operating System Deployment Feature Pack enhancement, for helping to reduce deployment headcount, and (2) support for automating the creation of desktop images, a practice that helps to control support costs by establishing a limited number of configurations.

Project implementation took about two months of work distributed over the latter half of 2004. Capgemini received assistance from two organizations: Microsoft Services, which provided best practices, architectural designs, and collateral and training; and Tier-

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Fore, a Toronto-based consulting firm that provided Capgemini an independent assessment of the financial value and impact of the project using an internally developed technology known as the Zero Touch Saving Analysis Tools.

Benefits

According to team members, the Microsoft Zero Touch–based automated desktop deployment project at the Capgemini Toronto Service Delivery Centre was a major success, resulting in benefits both expected and unexpected.

Fast and Cost-Effective Deployment

First, the team demonstrated that using Zero Touch to implement an automated desktop deployment could deliver sizable savings in time and money. For example, on prior operating-system deployments, Capgemini teams typically installed the new operating system and images on 5–20 desktops per night. On this project, the team easily managed up to 50 per night and could have gone much higher, as Kassabian explains. "Our conservative approach was not based on technical constraints but rather to keep from disrupting essential business practices by introducing the new operating system on too many desktops at once," he says. "In fact, the Microsoft Zero Touch technology is so scalable that we would have been comfortable upgrading hundreds of desktops at a time."

Even more notable was the rapid return on investment (ROI). According to the Tier-Fore assessment, the payback time on the Microsoft Zero Touch technology by itself was an impressive 16 months, and just four months when user impact was factored in. Much of the ROI stems from a significant savings in the cost of each core-image upgrade—as much as 90 percent—for an overall deployment savings of 25 percent. According to Tier-Fore Partner Martin West,

"Overall savings could easily go higher than 25 percent in a larger deployment, because the up-front costs of infrastructure could be amortized over a larger number of desktops."

Kassabian explains that much of the savings for this deployment resulted from the comparatively low level of involvement from professional staff—from an average of 20 people down to just 5, and in some cases just one, a system administrator. He goes on to explain that by avoiding having to send a technician to the desktop for an upgrade, a company or department saves more than just technician and user time associated directly with that task. "It also saves the time that both of them might spend on work that has nothing to do with the upgrade—usually application or configuration issues that users are tempted to ask about when someone is there," he says. "When you consider the value-added activities that the technician and the user could be doing instead, the traditional technician-at-the-desk deployment can be a big time-waster. You avoid that altogether with automated deployment."

A Thumbs-Up from Users

According to Stoneman, the project also resulted in a higher level of user satisfaction than on prior deployments: "Generally, when we do something new I hear about it, but this time there wasn't a single phone call of complaint." Kassabian concurs. "I remember some deployments in the past where we had to address a number of user concerns. But after this one, our team was applauded in the management meeting."

A number of users had specific compliments on the deployment:

- Steve Allin, Director, Service Desk: "There was no disruption to my work, and the upgraded system has performed very well."

- Rob Basque, Line of Business Leader, Infrastructure Management: "The upgrade was a pain-free experience."

- Jim Hutton, Manager, Database Services: "This method of upgrading desktops is a great leap forward, and I wholeheartedly endorse it."

- Barb Keenan, Vice President, Human Resources: "I went home in the evening and came back in the morning with a fully upgraded system, without skipping a beat."

- Betty Oppenheimer, Team Lead, Service Desk: "I was astonished at how easy this transition was for the users and for those of us at the help desk. It was the smoothest operating-system upgrade I've ever experienced."

Lessons Learned

Members of the project team are now applying what they learned in the pilot externally, enabling Capgemini to deliver expedience, cost savings, and other Zero Touch–based benefits to customers with thousands of desktops and users. This is especially applicable to customers with aging servers and low-bandwidth networks. As Kassabian points out, "Recent enhancements to SMS, one of the primary elements of Zero Touch, make this technology ideal for addressing the challenges of low bandwidth. This is another advantage of using Microsoft Zero Touch."

Still another advantage of using Zero Touch, according to Kassabian, is that it helps to make the advantages of a centralized and fully automated desktop deployment clear to management. "The main challenge is to convince management of the value of treating the desktop computer as an appliance that must stay current," he says. "This means that upgrades are business as usual, not a major event, and users don't need someone at the desk to help them through. In that context, you need to use a fully automated desktop-deployment engine, and thanks to its reliability and scalability, Microsoft Zero Touch is the ideal candidate for the job."

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