



City of Seattle

City of Seattle Finds the Reliability, Manageability, and Peripheral Support It Needs in Windows XP Professional

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Solution Overview

The City of Seattle is addressing the compound challenge of limited IT resources, diverse PC skills among employees, and the need for wide peripheral support with a move to Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional. After just four months in a pilot program, City IT executives found Windows XP Professional to be ideal for meeting their needs in terms of reliability, compatibility with earlier applications, advanced management tools, and support for USB and other cutting-edge peripheral technologies.

Situation

When IT executives at the City of Seattle began compiling a wish list for what they wanted most in a new client operating system, there was no debate over what would go at the top: manageability. The factors motivating this decision should be familiar to anyone who's worked in the public realm. As in other local government entities, the City of Seattle has users at all levels of PC expertise but also has a limited set of IT resources, so it's vital those resources are applied appropriately. The City also employs a large number of shift workers, such as police officers, firefighters, road-maintenance crews, utility-plant workers, fleet auto-repair mechanics, and others. This means that many users are accessing their applications and systems at a time of day or night when IT support is even more limited. Moreover, City employees use a significant number of applications developed for earlier operating systems. These employees need an environment that enables them to access the applications they rely on with minimal assistance from IT.

Another item that appeared on the City of Seattle IT executives' wish list is enhanced support for peripherals. In government, documentation of processes and activities is vital, so City of Seattle employees ranging from police administrators to building inspectors to the issuers of business licenses must be able to access powerful new devices for documenting their work efficiently and

Customer Profile

Local government with offices in more than 40 locations across the Seattle metropolitan area, 11,000 employees, and \$2 billion in combined 2000 revenues.

Business Situation

Needed a more manageable client operating system to address challenges stemming from limited IT support, vastly diverse user expertise, widely used legacy applications, and the need for advanced process-documentation devices.

Solution

Benefits

Reducing required workgroup replication images by up to 85 percent, running legacy applications cleanly, simplifying IT support, enjoying compatibility with sophisticated multimedia devices.

Software and Services

Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional

Scenario

Local government

Infrastructure

6,300 desktops, 1,200 laptops

Hardware

Primarily Gateway desktops and Gateway and Toshiba laptops, also some Compaq, Dell, and Panasonic

cost-effectively. This requires a client operating system with fully integrated support for such technologies as USB, FireWire, and wireless networking.

Solution

Initially, City of Seattle IT executives were planning to pursue these goals with a migration to the Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional operating system. But those plans changed just a few months before the scheduled deployment, when the City of Seattle was offered the chance to take part in a pilot program for the Microsoft Windows XP Professional operating system. Tony Ryan, desktop services manager in the Department of Information Technology, was intrigued. "As a public entity we rarely venture near the cutting edge of technology," he says. "So we saw this as a terrific opportunity for the City to try the most advanced desktop technology out there."

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Benefits

Reliability and Simplified Management

Nearly 900 users from three City of Seattle departments joined the four-month-long pilot, which Ryan declared a complete success in terms of both manageability and peripheral support. Chief among the factors contributing to the manageability goal was reliability. "Reliability is a key part of manageability, so we are encouraged by the full 32-bit architecture of Windows XP Professional, its foundation in the Windows NT® kernel, and its protected memory mode," he points out. "By giving IT staff a more reliable platform, Windows XP Professional enables us to focus our energies on enhancing user opportunities rather than fixing the same problem over and over."

Tony Ryan
Desktop Services Manager
Department of Information
Technology
City of Seattle

Another aspect of manageability is the ease of deploying and maintaining individual user workstations, and central to this is the Windows XP Professional tool known as SysPrep. As Ryan explains, traditionally a replication image for given set of workstations includes not only the base operating system, preferred settings, and applications but also hardware brand and version specifics. Windows XP Professional SysPrep eliminates the need for hardware specifics, enabling IT to use the same image for multiple brands and versions of desktops and laptops. "For the 1,800 PCs that I support, this means we can get by with just four or five images instead of the 20 or 30 we had to develop and maintain before," he says.

Still another manageability advantage for City of Seattle IT executives is offered by the Windows XP Professional Application Compatibility Mode. As explained by Lance Fuhrman, customer service manager in Seattle Public Utilities, IT staff members support seven or eight enterprise-wide legacy applications, many of them 16-bit and many of them user-authored. Being able to run these applications smoothly on any given client machine is vital, and so far, that's just what Windows XP Professional is doing. "I haven't seen anything that won't run in compatibility mode on Windows XP Professional," he says. "This includes applications for Windows 3.1 and even for MS-DOS®, such as an engineering solution that we've used for over a decade for determining vectors in structures and bridges."

Valuable Management and Error-Reporting Tools

Whatever the management need, Ryan, Fuhrman, and their IT colleagues are streamlining their work with the help of Microsoft Management Console (MMC), a powerful tool made available in the client environment through Windows XP Professional. With MMC snap-ins, IT managers can



customize templates to provide a given individual only the tools needed for his or her support responsibilities. Service-desk employees, for instance, can be issued a template that permits access to application and security logs, errors, and warnings, while desktop-support or application-developer employees can be issued templates providing full access to all operating-system components.

Rounding out the manageability advantages of Windows XP Professional for the City of Seattle is a feature that enables IT staff to streamline their involvement with issues that users might encounter in their everyday work. Known as Error Reporting, this feature automatically sends a message to Microsoft Customer Support that captures the memory point at which an error occurs, without compromising security. "Error Reporting can simplify a great deal of our support efforts, helping IT staff to document problems and helping users to receive the assistance they need in a prompt and consistent way," Ryan points out.

Advanced Peripheral Support, Benefits to Go Around

For Ryan and Fuhrman, the advanced peripheral support in Windows XP Professional means their IT staff can add new hardware devices with little or no need to reconfigure or integrate hardware onto an existing image. "We really value the robust plug-and-play support provided by Windows XP Professional for a wide selection of peripheral drivers, especially USB," Fuhrman says, adding that USB support is particularly important because that standard is so widely used among new devices and because it's faster and easier to configure. "We are now free to install virtually any device that relies on USB and be confident that Windows XP Professional will be compatible with it."

According to City of Seattle deployment plans, all 6,300 desktops and 1,200 laptops will be running Windows XP Professional by the end of 2002, with half the installations being made on existing machines and half on new ones. "Windows XP Professional accommodates itself to our environment—not only in terms of hardware but also in terms of software, through its support for legacy applications on one hand and the newest, most powerful multimedia devices on the other," Ryan says. Even better, he adds, is that the benefits of the new operating system are shared widely. "By providing enhanced reliability, simplified management, and support for the new peripherals we need, Windows XP Professional is saving energy and effort on the part of IT professionals, valuable time for users, and money for the taxpayers."

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Lance Fuhrman
Customer Service Manager
Seattle Public Utilities
City of Seattle

Windows XP Professional gives you the freedom to do what you want at home and at work — simply, reliably, and securely.

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