



**Microsoft Customer Solution**

**Case study**

**Enhanced Stability, Functionality, and Performance Deliver Gains in Accounting Firm's Productivity and Staff Satisfaction**

"The move to Windows XP Professional has significantly improved the productivity of our staff, thanks to enhancements in stability, remote functionality, performance, and security."

**Michael McKerley**  
Partner  
McKerley & Noonan

**M**ckerley & Noonan, P.C. is a Nashville-based accounting firm that relies on a combination of office and home-based professionals to serve its clients. Since its founding in 1999, the firm has worked closely with PC Serv Technology Consultants, a Microsoft Value Added Provider, to supply its staff with the software technology necessary to meet clients' needs efficiently and effectively. In late 2002, McKerley & Noonan enlisted PC Serv to upgrade the firm's server operating system from Microsoft Small Business Server version 4.5 to Small Business Server 2000. In turn, the consulting firm introduced McKerley & Noonan to Microsoft Windows XP Professional, a more stable, functional, and powerful desktop operating system—and one that could be implemented in time for the upcoming tax season.



CUSTOMER PROFILE	BUSINESS SITUATION	SOLUTION	BENEFITS
McKerley & Noonan, P.C. is a Nashville-based accounting firm founded in 1999 and employing 10 people. PC Serv Technology Consultants is a Microsoft Value Added Provider specializing in deployments to small businesses.	McKerley & Noonan wanted to boost staff productivity by addressing challenges in stability, remote functionality, and performance. Specifically, the firm wanted to eliminate user downtime and terminal-based application licensing fees, and make applications more accessible to staff working off-site.	With the help of PC Serv and in conjunction with an upgrade of its server to Microsoft® Small Business Server 2000, McKerley & Noonan implemented the Microsoft Windows® XP Professional operating system on its client PCs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Savings of U.S.\$200 weekly in user downtime</li> <li>▪ Savings of \$1,500 yearly in software licensing fees</li> <li>▪ More strategic use of a mission-critical time-and-billing application</li> <li>▪ Enhanced performance</li> <li>▪ Tightened security</li> <li>▪ Expanded opportunities for recruiting new staff and new business</li> </ul>



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## Situation

Nashville-based McKerley & Noonan is an organization of highly knowledgeable, extensively trained, and well-paid accounting professionals who depend on access to advanced software tools to get their jobs done. But in the past, according to PC Serv Partner and Consultant Jeff Cate, the firm experienced significant problems with stability.

“Users endured system lockups at least twice weekly,” Cate says. “Each lockup involved at least 10 to 15 minutes of server downtime, and often as many as six users were forced to shut down their PCs as the server was being rebooted. Considering that each user was billing his or her time at up to \$100 per hour, these lockups represented a sizable waste of human resources for a small business.”

The functionality of the outdated IT environment also posed challenges, especially for McKerley & Noonan’s “virtual office” environment. Historically, McKerley & Noonan relied on Microsoft® Windows® 2000 Terminal Services to enable staff members to access mission-critical tax and time-and-billing applications while working from home or otherwise off-site. Recently, however, the vendors of these applications raised the licensing fees for use in a Terminal Services environment. This fee increase resulted in additional costs of \$1,500 each year for the tax application and forced the firm to forgo using Terminal Services for the time-and-billing application—a move that wound up costing the firm in other ways.

McKerley & Noonan Partner Michael McKerley explains: “Staff members who worked primarily from home would have to document their time and billing information using fax or wait until they came to the office to enter the data into their PCs there. This reporting method was

not only more time-consuming but also less accurate because of the delay between the completion and reporting of tasks. Consequently, we found it harder to make well-informed decisions in a timely fashion about how much a given task for a given client should cost.”

## Solution

In late 2002, attractive hardware pricing options and a window of opportunity in the Microsoft Open License Program motivated McKerley and his colleagues to upgrade their server and client hardware and server operating system. Cate took the opportunity to introduce the firm to a new client operating system as well: Microsoft Windows XP Professional, which, along with Microsoft Office XP Professional, was available preloaded on the firm’s client hardware of choice—the Dell Dimension desktop computer.

“In our experience, businesses consistently come out ahead by deploying the most recent client operating system alongside the most recent server operating system,” Cate says. “As we pointed out to McKerley & Noonan, it’s an approach that can help a business to make the most of both technologies—and they agreed.”

In a matter of weeks, Cate deployed a new Dell PowerEdge server with Microsoft Small Business Server 2000, Exchange 2000 Server, and Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2000, and five Dell Dimension desktop PCs with Windows XP Professional and Office XP Professional preinstalled. He also began upgrading selected PCs used by staffers working primarily from their homes to Windows XP Professional and Office XP Professional.

## Benefits

From the evidence gathered after just a few months of use, the new, more powerful PCs coupled with the advanced capabilities of Microsoft Windows XP Professional represent a welcome improvement at McKerley & Noonan. As McKerley puts it, “The move to Windows XP Professional has significantly improved the productivity of our staff, thanks to enhancements in stability, remote functionality, performance, and security.”

### Productivity Gains Measured in Dollars and Morale

For starters, the twice-weekly PC lockups are a thing of the past. “This past tax season, from December all the way through April 15, we didn’t have a single lockup,” McKerley says. “This not only means a productivity savings of some \$200 per week—savings that we can pass along to our clients—but also has long-term productivity implications in terms of staff morale.”

Morale may be hard to measure quantitatively, but McKerley strongly believes that it makes a difference in the productivity of his staff. “Most accountants dread the tax season because it means working virtually every waking hour for 10 or 12 weeks on end—and they dread it even more if their tools aren’t up to the job,” he says. “Conversely, having access to a tool they can count on, like Windows XP Professional, really boosts their morale. And that in itself can help them to use their time, talent, and energy more effectively.”

### Making the Virtual Office a Strategic Advantage

Another productivity booster that’s come with the deployment of Windows XP Professional applies to McKerley & Noonan’s virtual office. Thanks to the Windows XP Professional Remote Desktop Connection, which enables users to connect to the office network from any location and work as if they were sitting

directly in front of their office PCs, McKerley & Noonan is moving away from its reliance on the Terminal Services environment. Even in the beginning, when just one employee’s home PC was outfitted with the capability, McKerley & Noonan recognized the potential benefits.

“By retiring the Terminal Services environment and providing that functionality with Remote Desktop Connection instead, we can avoid having to upgrade our terminal server, which would have been a \$3,000 one-time cost,” McKerley says. “More important, we can provide both the tax and time-and-billing applications to users in a simple, powerful, and transparent way. We’ll save at least \$1,500 per year on the additional tax-software licensing fees. We’ll also enable home-based users to tap directly into the time-and-billing software so the firm can make the most timely and informed business decisions about the costs of various services.”

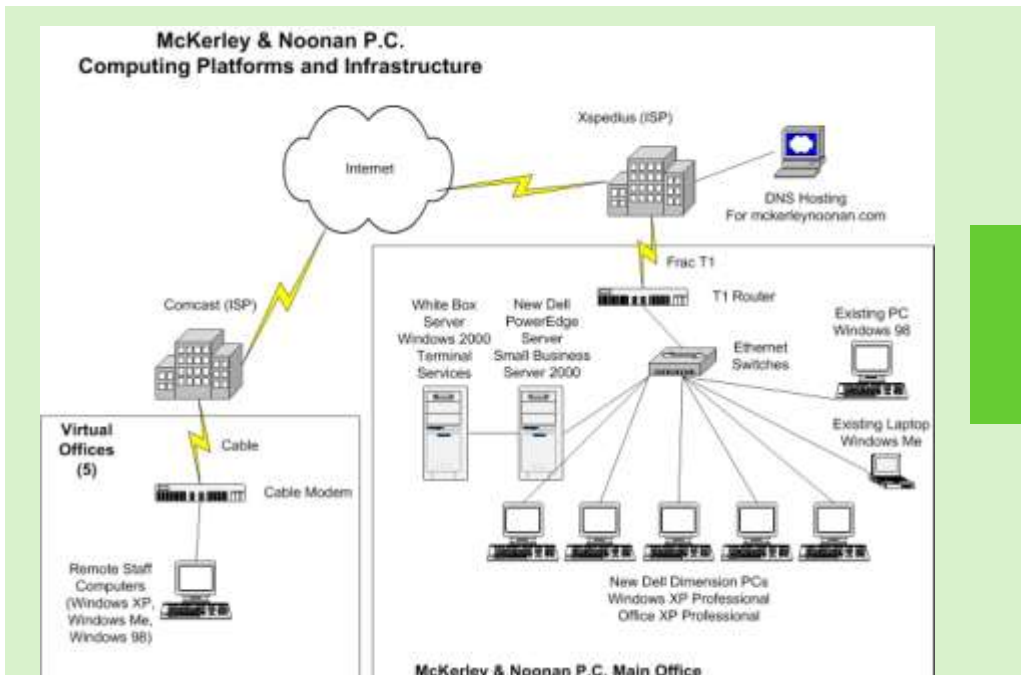
McKerley goes on to say that it’s not just the applications that have been running in the Terminal Services environment that will become available more cost-effectively to McKerley & Noonan staff through a Windows XP Professional Remote Desktop Connection. It’s any application running on the firm’s Small Business Server 2000-based network. For McKerley, this represents “a huge advantage” for staffers who work at home even just occasionally.

“Being able to access everything as if they were at the office, instead of being limited to applications deployed in the Terminal Services environment, gives our off-site staff all the functionality of those working full-time in the office,” McKerley says. “Moreover, because some very popular accounting applications are not available in a Terminal Services environment but are available on the desktop, everyone at McKerley & Noonan will enjoy access to

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#### Jeff Cate

Partner and Consultant  
PC Serv Technology Consultants



Despite being a business of just 10 people, McKerley & Noonan has implemented a sophisticated computing infrastructure based on Microsoft server and client technologies.

a greater selection of tools for doing their work.”

This benefits not only the individual employees but also the entire firm. “As we grow in the future, it can’t help but advance our recruitment efforts to have a fully functioning and fully comprehensive virtual office,” McKerley says.

Still other advantages of replacing the Terminal Services environment with the remote access capability of Windows XP Professional include improved performance and stability. As Cate explains, “You might think that a Terminal Services environment would deliver higher perceived performance to users because only screen images are moving over the wire. But in our experience, users accessing desktop-based applications through the remote accessing features of Windows XP Professional are enjoying better performance because the newer desktops have more processing power than the Terminal Services application server.” McKerley concurs: “Performance is one more reason we are excited about deploying Windows XP Professional to all our home-based staffers.”

### An Even Stronger Security Platform

In fact, performance in the Windows XP Professional environment represents a major benefit for McKerley & Noonan. The newer hardware accounts for much of the difference, but not all. “An equal portion of the performance gain comes from Windows XP Professional, which, thanks to its 32-bit multitasking architecture, takes far greater advantage of improvements in hardware than prior desktop operating systems,” Cate says. “It’s a gain we see consistently with our clients who make the move to Windows XP Professional.”

Yet another advantage of the McKerley & Noonan move to Windows XP Professional is enhanced security. Because of the stringent confidentiality requirements of a business that routinely deals with clients’ financial records, McKerley & Noonan has long implemented solid security policies. But now the firm has an even stronger security platform, says Cate. “Unlike the prior Windows operating system, Windows XP Professional requires proper authentication before a user can start work at a desktop,” he explains. “This means one less worry

about an intruder or someone with after-hours access to the office gaining access to sensitive files.”

Stability, a vastly improved virtual office environment, higher performance, and enhanced security—these are benefits McKerley & Noonan began enjoying almost immediately after deploying Windows XP Professional. McKerley looks forward to expanding these benefits,

even as he reflects on the changes that have already taken place. “Our current staff are working more productively, virtual-office costs are down, functionality is up, and security is enhanced, making us more attractive to potential new staff and clients alike,” he says. “I continue to be amazed by this technology, and all that we are able to do with it, that 10 years ago we couldn’t even fathom.”

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

For more information about Windows XP Professional, go to:  
<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/>

## Software and Services

- Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional
- Microsoft Office XP Professional
- Microsoft Windows Server System™
  - Microsoft Windows 2000 Terminal Services
  - Microsoft Small Business Server 2000
  - Microsoft Exchange 2000 Server
  - Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2000
  - Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000

## Hardware

Dell PowerEdge  
Dell Dimension

## Partner

PC Serv Technology Consultants



## For More Information

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<http://www.microsoft.com/>

Founded in 1996 and based in Franklin, Tennessee, PC Serv Technology Consultants provides expert technical guidance exclusively to companies with 50 or fewer computers. PC Serv is one of 40 companies nationwide (and the only one in its state) to be named to the Microsoft Value Added Provider Roundtable. For more information about PC Serv Technology Consultants, visit:  
<http://www.pcserv.net/>

For more information about McKerley & Noonan, call (615) 279-0088.

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