



## MICROSOFT WINDOWS XP PROFESSIONAL CUSTOMER SOLUTION

# Pella Corporation Anticipates Major Savings in Administration, Service, and Support with Enterprisewide Deployment of Windows XP

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***By standardizing some 2,200 desktop and laptop PCs on the Microsoft Windows XP Professional operating system, one of the nation's leading manufacturers of windows and doors will streamline the way it manages and supports its client PCs. Using capabilities like Remote Assistance, coupled with centralized administration through Active Directory Group Policy (part of an upgrade to Windows 2000 Server), Pella anticipates cutting IT costs by at least \$250,000 U.S. annually. Moreover, the deployment will simplify communication among Pella's facilities across the United States without requiring the addition or maintenance of support staff at each site.***

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### **Situation**

Even in a time of economic uncertainty, Pella Corporation is growing. The Iowa-based manufacturer of windows and doors, perhaps best known for its innovative "disappearing" Rolscreen\*, now has a manufacturing presence stretching from Oregon to Pennsylvania.

With its highly customer-focused approach to business, this privately held company has chalked up some 60 U.S. patents since its founding in 1925 and is dedicated to continuous improvement. This approach is reflected in the strategic way that IT executives think about their client PC environment and most recently in their decision to standardize on the Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional operating system. In a deployment underway since mid-2002, the company is installing Windows XP Professional and Office XP Professional on all of its 1,900 desktop and 300 laptop computers as well as Microsoft Windows 2000 Server on servers distributed at about a dozen sites.

According to Senior Business Systems Manager Jim Thomas, the decision to standardize on Windows XP stems from ongoing concerns about how to best serve customers in addressing the short-term and long-term costs of management and administration of the Pella client environment. "In the past, we had a collection of operating systems, software releases, and



### Solution Overview

#### **Customer Profile**

Privately held window and door manufacturer founded in 1925, headquartered in Iowa, with roughly 6,800 employees. Most widely known for its "disappearing" Rolscreen\* as well as some 60 U.S. product and design patents.

#### **Business Situation**

Needed a standardized desktop and laptop environment, a way to support and service client PCs promptly and cost-effectively, centralized control over the client environment for reliability, and flexibility to add new facilities without necessarily having to add IT support staff.

#### **Solution**

##### **Benefits**

- Deployment effort advancing 50 percent faster with the help of Microsoft Consulting Services
- Ability to restore a client system in minutes, not hours
- IT administration and support savings of U.S. \$250,000 annually

##### **Software and Services**

Microsoft® Office XP Professional  
Microsoft Systems Management Server 2.0  
Microsoft Windows® 2000 Server with Active Directory  
Microsoft Windows XP Professional  
Microsoft Consulting Services

##### **Hardware**

Mostly Hewlett-Packard VL and E-Vectra Series on the (1,900) desktops, IBM ThinkPad on the (300) laptops

##### **Scenario**

Internal standardization: ease of management and support, reliability

hardware configurations over which we had limited control," he says. "This led to a time-consuming and therefore costly approach to support and maintenance."

For example, with the company's increasing presence on the Internet, security concerns forced the update of dozens of installed applications at a much faster rate than in previous years; In addition, without a consistent approach to the software installed on client machines, Thomas and his colleagues struggled to deliver the level of reliability required to position the company even more competitively for the future. Their struggle was all the more crucial because Pella depends on its client PCs not only for office and executive functions but also for mission-critical manufacturing operations.

As Thomas and his colleagues evaluated the situation, they recognized that their challenges and objectives were tightly interrelated. A smarter approach to management and cost control would rely on software being implemented in a standardized fashion; administration, support, and upgrades being provided remotely when necessary; and software and hardware assets being managed centrally and uniformly. Further, reliability would be enhanced by maintaining a standardized set of client applications and more easily accessible help-desk support.

Thomas admits that executives faced a tough choice initially deciding between Microsoft Windows XP Professional and Windows 2000 for their client PCs. "We knew that both operating systems could deliver the management, reliability, and security capabilities we wanted," he reports. "But once we became convinced that they were equally stable and robust, and after we thought more about the broad selection of applications available for Windows XP, we felt it made more sense for us to move to that operating system directly so we wouldn't wind up doing two upgrades."

## **Solution**

The Pella deployment team is working closely with individuals from Microsoft Consulting Services, and on their advice the team is using the Remote Installation Services (RIS) component of Windows 2000 Server to expedite installation of the default desktop. It's been good advice, according to Communications Engineer and Project Leader Kenny Nedder.

With RIS, Nedder and his colleagues simply boot each client PC to the RIS server and select a desktop image based on a given hardware model. "Without RIS, we would have to boot to a floppy and proceed with Ghost\* images, using one big file that's stored in multiple locations, and without a consistent, defined process," he says. "But thanks to RIS, we can define images centrally, ensuring consistency across the enterprise. It makes a big difference not only in the initial deployment but also for our peace of mind, knowing that installations in place on day 1 will be unchanged on day 2 and beyond."

Nedder goes on to say that the introduction of RIS wasn't the only value that the individuals from Microsoft Consulting Services have brought to the project. "Their project-management experience, their technical expertise, and their knowledge of best practices are indispensable, particularly in the deployment of [Microsoft] Active Directory®," he says. "With the help of Microsoft Consulting Services, we are moving about 50 percent faster than we would have on our own."

The solution being deployed at Pella consists of Windows XP Professional and Office XP Professional on the client computers, Active Directory service (with Group Policy) and Microsoft Systems Management Server version 2.0 on the servers, and an upgrade to Windows 2000

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Kenny Nedder  
Communications Engineer  
Pella Corporation

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Server on one server at each of about a dozen Pella sites, including facilities in Iowa, Oregon, Ohio, and Minnesota.

Here are the deployment plans set out by Thomas, Nedder, and their colleagues:

- Windows XP and Office XP will provide a standard client image across all PCs in the corporation.
- Active Directory will provide the capabilities of Group Policy to enhance central device management and position the company to leverage future Active Directory-enabled applications.
- Systems Management Server will provide the software distribution and control capabilities necessary to remotely manage the PCs and the metrics to simplify licensing compliance.

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Kenny Nedder  
Communications Engineer  
Pella Corporation

## **Benefits**

### ***Saving Time in Restoring Existing Systems and Deploying New Applications***

As the deployment proceeds, Thomas is discovering how much he likes the capabilities of Windows XP. Take System Restore, for example, which he says will be particularly valuable for Pella’s laptop users and IT professionals.

“Because of diverse dial-in capabilities and access needs, we cannot restrict the applications available to laptop users and IT staff as we can with other users,” Thomas says. “This means there is always the risk of system crashes from corrupted software. But with System Restore, the user can bring the system back exactly as it was prior to a crash without having to reload the operating system. This means instead of being down until a support person can address the situation and then requiring two hours of the support person’s time, the user can be back up and running on their own in about 10 minutes.”

Thomas also believes the enhanced application and device compatibility available through Windows XP will come in handy, particularly considering that even after the standardization is complete, Pella will still support about 200 client applications. “The tremendous volume of testing that Microsoft has done to certify applications is instrumental in ensuring that existing solutions and peripherals running on our older systems will keep running once we move everyone to Windows XP,” he says. “It also will help to simplify the installation of new applications by reducing the level of testing we have to do.”

### ***Dramatically Cutting Cost, Time, and Effort in Management and Support***

Of course, only certain applications will ever make their way to the hard disks of Pella users, for all the reasons that Thomas and Nedder have detailed: the importance of consistency, the need for the highest level of reliability, and the effort to keep productivity high and support, management, and administrative costs low. Consequently, Pella IT executives especially value the combination of the Windows XP Remote Assistance capability with Active Directory Group Policy and Systems Management Server.

“Most of our users require some support with their PCs, so with these technologies we can reduce the number of calls from users, address a greater percentage of the calls without a desk-side visit, and install patches and upgrades without disrupting someone’s work,” Nedder says. “All this will contribute to the overall productivity of the workforce.”

It also will boost the productivity of technical support staff, adds Thomas. “With Group Policy we’ll be able to effect a more standardized and consistent set of applications on our client machines,

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thus reducing the frequency of user problems and calls to the support desk," he explains. "For the problems that still require calls, we'll use Remote Assistance to help the support staff work twice as efficiently, boosting our technicians' productivity to the tune of a \$100,000 annual savings at headquarters alone."

Moreover, these technologies will enable the company to continue to grow without necessarily having to add support staff at each facility. "By having Remote Assistance, Active Directory, Group Policy, and Systems Management Server capabilities in place, we'll avoid having to increase support headcount or having to send out a technician whenever there's an application or related PC problem," Thomas explains. "At the same time, we'll cut support response time for users."

Another advantage of Group Policy in particular is the limits it places on users' ability to modify their systems in ways that can cause major problems. "This alone will help to cut annual support costs another \$100,000 across the enterprise," Thomas adds.

### ***The Incalculable Value of Reliability***

Reliability is yet another area in which the Windows XP deployment will reduce support costs at Pella. "Just in my own work with Windows XP, I've gone for six weeks without a single system freeze or blue screen," Thomas reports. "Couple that level of stability with the faster support response available through Remote Assistance, and I think we'll easily see a user-productivity advantage of \$50,000 annually. Moreover, by boosting reliability in our manufacturing shop-floor PCs, we save ourselves a lot of worry. That's hard to put a price tag on but, like all the advantages we anticipate through this deployment, it will be considerable."

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Jim Thomas  
Senior Business Systems Manager  
Pella Corporation

Microsoft 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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