

iTCo

Algoetic Labs
Windows XP Case
Study

White Paper

Customer Profile

We shall refer to this customer as Algoretic Labs (iTCO has been asked to remove the true identity of this company and its employees).

- Rapidly growing bio-technology Company.
- Focused on delivering algorithms for whole genome processing.
- 15 US Locations.
- 6,100 employees.

Situation

Algoretic Labs has acquired several smaller companies over the course of the past 3 years. The additional of each new company has continued a trend of diversifying the desktop environment.

Internal infrastructure departments have not been able to keep up with such a chaotic desktop environment. Desktop engineers are forced to spread their expertise over 3 platforms, Microsoft Windows (of various versions), Linux and a more limited amount of Apple Mac's.

Users from differing platforms have a hard time sharing information. Users from newly acquired companies (with diversified desktops), feel isolated from the main core of the company because they cannot run key applications.

Desktop costs are high and productivity is low. Desktop related issues begin to become a frequent topic in Executive meetings. Finally a decision to standardize the desktop environment was made.

As for standardization, Allen (CIO) says this became essential due to the firm's healthy growth rate over the past years. "Having acquired 3 smaller companies in the three years, and all the desktop equipment that came with them, we needed a desktop environment that would help us take advantage of economies of scale in our highly distributed organization," he points out. IT Desktop Manager Kevin concurs on all points. "We were seeking an operating system that would give us stability for running legacy, current, and future applications alike and provide an efficient way to implement a secure and standardized desktop across the organization," he says. "And Windows XP played right into that."

Solution

iTCO Solutions was selected as the technology partner to manage the deployment and integration of Windows XP Professional.

The deployment team began work on a Windows XP deployment in late 2001 and completed the job just over seven months. Consisting entirely of iTCO Engineers, the team deployed the operating system on all 6,100 client machines at the firm's U.S. offices (and are now considering the prospect of international deployment as well).

Allen (CIO) says the flexible approach taken by iTCO enabled the deployment to proceed with minimal disruption. "Fitting the deployment head count to the office head count enabled us to deploy virtually every office, no matter what its size, in a weekend." As for the decision to use exclusively external resources for the deployment, Allen says that the benefits clearly outweighed the costs. "We just needed to get this done quickly and we could not simply pull our existing engineers from their operational tasks."

Benefits

Optimal Deployment

The deployment team accomplished its goal of installing Windows XP just 2 weeks before the original scheduled completion, despite an unanticipated merger that added 300 users mid-deployment. User State Migration Tool (USMT) played a major role in enabling the team to implement the new desktop with minimal disruption to users, a capability that easily might have cost us an additional \$40,000 had they been forced to obtain it through a third-party solution.

Simplified Administration, Implementation of Security Policies

Another Windows XP capability that helped to streamline deployment and is helping to simplify long-term system management is support for Group Policy. As Allen (CIO) explains, in a company as geographically dispersed as Alcoretic Labs, the centralized configuration, management, and administration enabled by Group Policy is essential. "Just consider that, in the past, to make a change on the desktop we had to send an individual or individuals anywhere from across a building to across the country," he says. "But thanks to Group Policy, we can now make a change once, and it replicates to every desktop in the network."

By centrally managing and updating desktops with Group Policy, they are saving significant costs in terms of user downtime, not to mention about 10 to 20 percent in support.

Group Policy is also allowing Alcoretic Labs to implement a new, more stringent, security policy. As Allen points out, "Our intellectual property is the most important asset this company owns, we must protect it further."

Standard, Stable, Supportable, Environment

The Windows XP Remote Assistance and Remote Desktop capabilities have been particularly valuable. With "Remote Assistance" support staff can access a user's PC remotely. This allows them to keep users up and running without having to send IT professionals to smaller offices.

Remote Desktop is also allowing users to access their work PC from home or from other offices when they travel. This has decreased the necessity for purchasing more expensive laptops, and removed the necessity of purchasing desktop computers for home use.

The increased stability of Windows XP is just one of the factors helping users and IT staff to spend more time on their immediate jobs and less time on dealing with software problems. An equally significant factor is the ability of Windows XP to run the array of applications that Algoretic Labs has inherited from the companies it has acquired.

Conclusions

Moving Algotretic Labs to a standardized desktop solution has yielded many significant technical advantages to the organization which have clearly reduced cost and increased productivity.

It has also added cultural changes to the corporation that are equally beneficial.

- The ability to share information without barriers.
- The ability to knock down technology barriers and make employees acquired from M&A feel "part of the family".
- The sanity of knowing that every desktop has the same core functionality and applications.

It is much harder to place a price tag on items like these, but that does not make them any less valuable.

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