

Case Study



- Customer:** Compass – Services to tackle problem drug use
- Solution:** Centralise all systems and data across 18 sites at the head office in York
- Key Benefits:** Data security, lowered support costs, improved reliability, greater scalability

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About Compass

Compass is a non profit, non government organisation, set up in 1986, to provide services to people concerned with the health and social impact of illicit drug use. In their 17 years of operation, they have established a network of agencies across the country, providing a comprehensive range of services spanning health, social and criminal justice care agendas.

The Problems

Compass were suffering from having unconnected IT systems around the country with little control over how they were managed or maintained.

There was also concern about data security, from file access rights all the way through to whether backups were being done properly.

Finally, a new application was being purchased to manage client information and would need to be rolled out across all 18 sites. There was concern that this would be hard to support in the long run and would not allow for data to be centralised with the existing systems.

The Requirements

The new system needed to solve all of the problems and be able to allow for rapid growth of the organisation, allowing new sites to be added easily with minimum disruption.

Sharing of information across the sites was also a key factor in the design. As the organisation is spread across the country, information would need to be easily available across site boundaries.

The installation also had to be completed in a short space of time as the new database system had to be in place for the end of the year.

The Solution

After a thorough selection process, appiChar were asked to design a system that would allow all of the systems and data to be run from the Compass head office in York.

The final design was based around **Microsoft Terminal Services** which allows all data and processing to be centralised. Rather than the traditional set up with applications installed onto PCs, software is only required on a small number of central servers and resources are then shared between users. One server can run 20-30 users at a time resulting in greatly lowered support and management costs.

The solution consisted of:

- Three Windows Server 2003 Terminal Servers to allow all remote computers to run applications from York
- The existing file and email infrastructure was upgraded to allow for the additional load on the Head Office infrastructure
- A reliable and fast SDSL line from Zen Internet at the Head Office to ensure the system was responsive
- Cyberguard hardware provided a Virtual Private Network (VPN) between all the sites to allow the organisation to have one single network
- Data and applications migrated away from the remote sites
- All PCs updated and virus software installed to ensure the systems were secure

The system was implemented on budget over a three month period. Although it was a complete change in terms of architecture, training requirements were kept to a minimum by ensuring everything was simple to use and support was readily available.

Benefits

Now the system is in place, Compass are benefiting from:

- **All data is now stored centrally** in York where it is backed up daily and taken off site. All data is securely stored with appropriate permissions. Administrators out in the field are freed from running IT.
- **Applications are based at head office** on central servers rather than installed onto local PCs, resulting in greatly lowered support costs and less down time
- **The new monitoring system was** rolled out to 150 users across 18 sites in **one hour**. With the previous system it would have taken weeks and cost thousands of pounds
- **No need to buy new PCs.** As all processing is done centrally, there is no need for new, fast desktop PCs. Compass are now getting donated equipment for free where they previously had to spend hundreds of pounds per PC.
- **One single monitoring database** for all sites means that producing reports and statistics across the whole data set can be done quickly and easily
- **Roaming and home workers** are now able to securely access all their documents and files wherever they are.
- **Opening new sites** is now a straight-forward process as only

simple and inexpensive infrastructure is required to gain all the facilities of the system

- **The system is totally scalable as** the central systems can be easily added to as the organisation grows

Supporting the New System

Even with a centralised system, support is a crucial part of the solution. As remote access is built into the system it allows for instant support no matter where a user is based.

Users are able to contact the **appiChar Helpdesk** directly whenever a problem occurs and talk to one of our qualified engineers. In around 80% of situations we are able to fix problems remotely and users are able to carry on with their work.

All calls to our helpdesk are logged so that Compass can monitor what people are calling in for. In 2006 our new support system will even allow all calls to be logged against the site they come from so the relevant location can be billed.

Conclusion

Overall the new system has greatly simplified the Compass IT systems and has allowed the organisation to easily implement a new monitoring database.

Director, **Steve Hamer** said of appiChar and the new systems:

"appiChar have helped us to greatly improve the reliability of our systems and at the same time significantly reduce the overall running costs - opening new services is now a fraction of the cost of our traditional systems.

Overall the service has been first class and I would recommend appiChar highly"