



TXT

Case Study

Bennett Auto Supply

Business Solutions from IGEL Technology



| thin clients | development | services | solutions

Many functions. One device.



“With IGEL, I know I’m making a sound investment for my company that will last.”

Founded in 1946, Bennett Auto Supply is one of the oldest auto parts suppliers in Florida. The family-owned business has a distribution center in Pompano Beach and 25 stores across the state, concentrated on the east coast. At each store location, the company offers a large inventory of products for both retail and wholesale customers, as well as a knowledgeable and professional staff. With over 430 employees and annual sales in excess of \$55 Million, Bennett Auto Supply is one of Florida’s foremost suppliers of auto parts.

The customer

- A family-owned business founded in 1946
- Distribution center in Pompano Beach and 25 stores across Florida
- 30 employees and annual sales in excess of \$55 Million

Business Solutions from IGEL Technology

“Four years ago, we knew that it was time to phase dumb terminals out of our IT infrastructure,” said John Thompson, director of information technology for Bennett Auto Supply. “Manufacturers were no longer offering new, updated dumb terminal technology, and we recognized that switching to thin clients would be a cost-effective way to upgrade our IT capabilities.”

In 2004, Bennett Auto Supply changed its entire IT infrastructure by replacing the dumb terminals in all of its stores with Neoware thin clients, purchasing a total of 230 machines. With the new thin clients, Bennett Auto Supply’s employees would have access to multiple applications on every terminal, enabling them to better serve customers.

However, the shift to the new thin clients created several unanticipated problems. The company relied on NoMachine’s NX software, which Neoware didn’t officially support. At the time of purchase, the vendor customized the software to the machines, but they were unwilling to address problems that came up later. Employees began to have frequent problems with terminal session issues, in which they were unexpectedly forced to log off the network. While the thin clients continued to be functional, the shutdowns were inconvenient, interrupting the company’s delivery of high quality customer service. Thompson recognized that the hardware wasn’t working as he planned, but the 230 thin clients he had were still relatively new and it didn’t make sense to replace them.

“We needed a solution that would salvage our existing machines, but we didn’t want to add more Neoware thin clients as we expanded our business,” Thompson explained. “We were opening a new store in Fort Myers, and the time was right to introduce a new thin client model that would better fit our needs moving forward.”

The Solution: IGEL 3210 LX thin clients

Thompson consulted Ray Heffron at Computer Products Corporation as he sought a solution. Founded in 1962, Computer Products Corporation (CPC) is one of the nation’s first computer sellers to offer solutions, service and support for their customers. As an IBM business partner, CPC works to incorporate IBM products into solutions for clients. Recognizing that the problem was at its root an NX-compatibility issue, Heffron recommended that Bennett Auto Supply purchase IGEL thin clients for its new store.

“The key component that IGEL had to offer that the Neoware machines lacked was compatibility with the NX software, which Bennett Auto Supply needed,” Heffron explained.

The challenge

- Provide new thin client hardware that is compatible with NX software, to phase into IT infrastructure over time
- Improve performance of existing Neoware thin clients, which aren’t operating properly because of software compatibility issues
- Allow the IT director to manage thin clients remotely



“IGEL’s thin clients are the only ones on the market that are embedded with NX-compatible software, and so the choice of IGEL was simple.”

Support for NoMachine’s NX software is one of the wide range of digital services that IGEL thin clients are capable of. In addition, IGEL thin clients are able to provide RDP, web, terminal emulation, Java and VoIP services. The company’s machines can also be connected to almost any served-based infrastructure, including Citrix-hosted applications, virtual PCs and server-based Linux applications.

After testing out a demo IGEL thin client, Thompson decided to purchase eleven 3210LX models for the company’s new Fort Myers location. Also at Heffron’s recommendation, Thompson purchased a new IBM server with an Ubuntu operating system that would better support NX software, and he upgraded the NX software the company was using from the free version to the enterprise-level software, which offered greater flexibility.

Superior Software Capabilities

“From the beginning, the difference between our new IGEL machines and the slightly older Neoware models was remarkable,” Thompson noted. “We didn’t encounter any of the software problems we were facing with our Neoware models, such as terminal session issues. The next question was how we were going to address the software issues we were having with our older thin clients.”

For the existing Neoware machines, Heffron had a cost-effective and innovative idea for how to improve their functionality: the company could replace the flash drives inside the Neoware thin clients with the same NX-compatible flash drives that IGEL used. The new memory cards would transform what was externally a Neoware thin client into a machine that functioned like an IGEL thin client. The transformation cost about \$120 per terminal, including both the hardware and the cost of labor – an amount that was several hundred dollars less than buying replacement thin clients. Using this method, Bennett Auto Supply was able to update all but 30 of its 230 Neoware machines; the 30 that could not be updated were older models for which the appropriate flash chips were not available. By salvaging most of its initial batch of thin clients, Bennett realized significant cost savings.

The solution

- IGEL 3210 LX (IGEL UD 3) thin clients
- New IGEL thin clients support NX software, ensuring that software works at an optimal level
- Software compatibility issues resolved with maximum cost-efficiency by replacing the Neoware flash drives with IGEL software.
- IGEL’s remote management software enables Bennett Auto Supply to manage thin clients remotely

Remote Manageability

Today Thompson is able to manage the IGEL thin clients in the Fort Myers store from his office on Florida’s east coast, using IGEL’s remote management software. Every IGEL thin client comes bundled with the powerful IGEL Remote Management Suite (RMS), which enables IT administrators to offer support from distant sites.

“The Remote Management Suite was another important differentiator when we chose IGEL thin clients,” Thompson said. “Our Neoware thin clients didn’t come embedded with any such software, and we haven’t attempted to manage them remotely. From a management perspective, IGEL’s RMS is a huge time-saver, and it allows me to work more efficiently.”

Conclusion

With IGEL thin clients, Bennett Auto Supply was able to put in place an IT infrastructure for its new west coast store that it hopes will ultimately become the model for the rest of its stores. Using IGEL’s NX-compatible software, Bennett Auto’s new thin clients operate at optimal levels, with no terminal session issues. Over time, the company plans to phase out its Neoware thin clients, replacing them with IGEL models that can easily be managed remotely, helping the IT team to be more efficient.

“We’ve learned that not all thin clients are the same – our experience with IGEL thin clients has been vastly better than our experience with Neoware’s,” Thompson summarized. “With IGEL, I know I’m making a sound investment for my company that will last.”

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