ETON TRAVEL GROUP

Eton Travel Group's switch to IGEL zero clients helps cut costs and management time

When Eton Travel Group was looking to upgrade its desktop thin clients across three office locations to cut costs and management time, the company chose IGEL Technology's zero clients.

SUMMARY

The Customer

• Eton Travel Group

• Full service travel management company

• Three offices in the UK

The Challenge

• Refresh desktops

• Save management time

• Remote access

The Solution

• IGEL Universal Desktop (UD3 and UD5) thin clients

• IGEL Universal Management Suite (UMS) Software

Key Benefits

• Time saving centralised management

• Standardised and stable desktop

• Future proofed desktop

Eton Travel Group is a full-service travel management company with a primary focus on providing unparalleled levels of personalized service, creative solutions to lower travel expenditure and state of the art technology, providing clients with the choice of booking travel on or offline.

In 2001, the company was the subject of a management buyout and continues to be led by a team of Shareholder-Managers ensuring complete commitment to its customers. Today, with UK offices in Eton, Wokingham and Maidenhead, Eton Travel Group consists of the following divisions: Corporate Travel, Meetings & Events, Specialist Sales & Groups, Entertainment Travel (dETONate), Touring Sport, Leisure and specialist tour operating.

For a modern leading travel management company, the ability to be able to communicate with and organize travel for customers relies entirely on technology. The Eton Travel Group estimates that its business can suffer just 30 minutes of downtime before it critically begins to impact on its service.

"A large proportion of our business is servicing the corporate traveller and email and telephone communication is critical to our work. If a business person finishes their meeting early and wants to change their booking to catch the next available flight, we need to be able to respond immediately to their request," explained Kay Fleet, IT & Systems Manager at Eton Travel Group.

Having operated a server-based computing infrastructure for the past 7 years and having recently switched from Microsoft Terminal Services to a Citrix virtual desktop solution, the company was now turning its attention to the desktop hardware.

The company wanted to add remote access and management functionality to its desktops and further standardize desktop profiles. Working closely with their IT support company, Solsis, they evaluated 3 different zero and thin client options, including the IGEL IZ3 HDX zero client. They found the IGEL device easy to set up and manage and quickly settled on this option.

The HDX zero clients from IGEL are solutions tailored to accessing Citrix XenDesktop and XenApp. They offer high performance at a low price. Citrix Appliance Mode enables the devices to boot quickly and directly to the virtual machine. Three available hardware platforms ensure that the specific performance and connectivity requirements of different workstations can be readily met.

> " Remote access and management of the new devices was something that we had not had previously and was very important to us moving forward. We have three offices and for IT support we were often having to jump in the car and travel to different offices to resolve issues or ask someone to use another device until the next time we were onsite."

The IZ3 HDX is an ideal workstations for task, office and knowledge workers with relatively high multimedia requirements. It comes with a large range of supported solutions, such as digital dictation or smart card authentication and good peripheral connectivity options including USB 3.0, 2 x DVI and optionally a serial port, WLAN or concealed USB port in the base.

The devices are connected to the virtual servers at the data center using Citrix XenDesktop. Applications delivered include standard Microsoft Windows 7 office applications and a host of specialized travel industry applications, including the Sabre airline reservation system.

Kay commented that they had started with more than 40 specialist applications, but these had been reduced and standardized considerably to make the platform more stable and reliable and to make the system more manageable for staff.

Today, the Eton Travel Group has more than 90 IGEL zero clients across three offices, with almost all staff using the devices.

"The roll-out was incredibly simple," said Kay. "Once Solsis had created and tested the master image and applications with the device, we used the IGEL management software to roll-out the desktops ourselves."

The IGEL Universal Management Suite software (UMS) comes free with every device. The UMS can be used to set-up, maintain and upgrade all IGEL thin clients from a central location using a policy-based graphical interface.

It is a simple to use management tool, which can have thin clients up and running in minutes. Intuitive to use, secure and scalable up to 100,000 thin clients, the IGEL UMS drastically reduces management time for IT administrators.

"We rolled out the devices office by office," explained Kay. "We installed 60 over one weekend and they all went live on the Monday morning. On the Tuesday, we did another office with 20 and they went live on the Wednesday and 12 more on Thursday that went live on Friday. It was simple. We had all worked hard with the User Acceptance Testing to make sure that we had ironed every potential issue we could and we had standardized the profile for everyone."

Kay added that the staff had accepted the new devices very quickly. "In my experience, the users don't care which device they use as long as it works and these devices work. There were no issues with this roll-out. We had just one problem unit and we sent it back and received a fresh unit the next day. To be honest, I was expecting more issues!"

Eton Travel Group had 7 year's service from their old desktops and Kay said that they were expecting more from the IGEL Zero Clients and the benefits were already clear.

"We have a standardized desktop, which is remotely manageable. The desktops can be upgraded and we can easily scale the system for expansion," said Kay.

"So long as IGEL keeps up with the technology as it evolves, I wouldn't look to replace them. At this point in time, I can't see what any other device could offer to add to or enhance what we have currently."

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