



FALKIRK COUNCIL

Falkirk Council introduces VDI and IGEL to deliver workplace flexibility and mobility for over 2,000 staff



Falkirk Council

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Falkirk Council has implemented virtual desktop infrastructure [VDI] to provide flexible and mobile working for over 2,000 staff and enable it to assess and rationalize its whole office estate to make better use of its building assets.

In addition, VDI is allowing the Council to meet its Public Service Network [PSN][1] compliance obligations and shift away from a continuous desktop replacement programme which was costing around £250,000 every year.

Falkirk Council has deployed Citrix WorkSpace as its VDI, mobile device and application management solution, along with 600 IGEL multimedia UD3 and 100 powerful quad core UD6 endpoints in addition to 1,000 IGEL Universal Desktop Converter [UDC] software licences. Supplied by I-KONIC, an IT solutions provider and IGEL partner based in Glasgow, this has put in place a flexible, easy to manage and cost-effective solution to support the future development of the organization. Tommy Evans, Falkirk Council's project lead for mobile and flexible working, explains, "Although it might sound cliché, moving from traditional PCs to thin client technology has genuinely been a paradigm shift for us. Along with mobile devices and iPads, staff aren't now tied to a particular desk. They just login from any IGEL device and are presented with Microsoft Office and applications tailored to their specific job role. We're trying to change the mindset of employees to make work an activity, not just somewhere you go from 9-5. We're empowering our staff to work anytime anywhere, even from home so they benefit from a good work-life balance."

The customer

Falkirk Council. Located in central Scotland within half an hour of Glasgow and Edinburgh, Falkirk Council provides a diverse and wide range of services to over 160,000 residents including bin collection, education, home care, planning application services, social housing, fostering and adoption services and roads maintenance. The council serves the largest towns in the area such as Falkirk, Bo'ness, Denny, Larbert, Stenhousemuir and Grangemouth - Scotland's premier port and home to its only major oil refinery.

The challenge

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The advantages

Re-using existing IT infrastructure 'sweats' assets longer and saves precious budget.



This is a huge cultural change for the Council and is allowing it to introduce flexible and remote working whilst ensuring availability of services to residents. Evans adds, "Even if there's a snowstorm and people can't get to an office, they can still login in and work as normal. VDI is also allowing us to review the buildings we currently have and exit old properties to lower our operational expenditure – helping towards making savings, which we hope will contribute to the approximately £60 million worth of savings which have to be made by 2023."

Re-using existing IT infrastructure 'sweats' assets longer and saves precious budget

After a series of proof of concept tests with all well-known thin client vendors, IGEL was selected. This was for a variety of reasons:

1. IGEL was the only supplier offering a software approach to managing desktops as opposed to just selling hardware. IGEL's UDC software was particularly attractive as it has allowed Falkirk Council to turn its existing Windows-based HP PC desktops into IGEL Linux endpoints to not only facilitate easy management of them, but to extend the life of the actual hardware as well. Clearly this saves a huge amount of money given the hundreds of PCs involved.
2. IGEL's Universal Management Suite (UMS) means that the whole UD3, UD6 and UDC environment can be centrally managed with IT staff able to shadow desktops to offer fast helpdesk support.
3. Compared to PCs, the IGEL UD3 and UD6 endpoints are quiet, produce less heat and are energy efficient. They come with an auto shut down feature too and turn off when not in use.
4. Security has been maximized. The IGEL terminals are controlled by the UMS with the IGEL Linux OS 'read only'. This means staff themselves cannot make changes to the endpoints locally or introduce security vulnerabilities as the desktop environment is 'locked down.'

VDI simplifies desktop management across multiple locations

The use of Citrix WorkSpace means that the challenges and overhead of managing thousands of PCs across various buildings has been removed. Software updates are easily made as data and applications are all held centrally such that IT staff don't have to traipse around machines updating things individually. Changes made in the datacenter automatically populate the connected IGEL desktops. This is key as PSN compliance requires councils to carefully manage the release dates of all key applications in use such as Microsoft Office and only be two versions behind the latest.

In addition, startup is now super-fast and takes seconds rather than minutes as was the case when PCs were used. Clearly this boosts staff productivity and avoids people wasting time as they wait for their desktops to 'boot up.'

Furthermore, hardware maintenance has been drastically simplified as IGEL terminals have no moving parts such as hard drives and fans.

The Citrix WorkSpace solution is powered by HPE server infrastructure. The Citrix control layer is hosted on two HIVEIO hyperconverged clusters for availability, each consisting of four HP ProLiant DL360 servers with the Citrix XenServer hypervisor. All virtual desktop workloads run from HPE Enterprise Moonshot System which is populated with 90 server cartridges across two chassis to deliver optimised performance. In total the council has invested around £1.8 million to completely transition away from PCs and put in place a much more modern, flexible and easy to manage desktop solution which – in the long term – is more cost effective.

Sean Russell, I-KONIC's managing director, says, "As a Scottish-based IGEL partner and Citrix Gold Solution Advisor, it's tremendously exciting to support Falkirk Council as they embrace virtual desktop and workspace technologies to boost efficiency and increase productivity. Our longstanding partnership with Falkirk Council, IGEL and Citrix goes from strength to strength with this transformation project. The never-ending rolling replacement of PCs has become a thing of the past, and users are able to access their applications and information from virtually anywhere."

Moving forward, Falkirk Council is reviewing its office requirements. Evans concludes, "One thing that is particularly pleasing about the project is how the council has used technology to save money whilst giving staff tools to work more efficiently and effectively. We're looking very carefully now at how we can release building assets through the use of Citrix and IGEL."

Jed Ayres, President and CEO, IGEL North America, says, "With all UK councils hit by budgets cuts, UDC is a smart way for them to save money and extend the life of any x86-based PC or laptop by converting them into an IGEL endpoint. It avoids perfectly good technology being thrown away. And it's quick and simple to do with the device then easy to manage using our UMS software."



SIMPLE



SMART



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