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Andy Drooker, Senior Director of Emerging Platforms/Technologies, The Weather Channel

The Weather Channel ensures a high-definition experience for users, anywhere, on any machine

The Weather Channel Companies (TWCC) delivers weather, news and information through several different media properties. The Weather Channel television network, reaches more than 100 million U.S. households. The Weather Channel digital properties, including the weather.com website, The Weather Channel Desktop and The Weather Channel Mobile, reach more than 45 million unique users per month. Digital properties also include Weather Services International (WSI), which provides business-to-business weather services, particularly for the media, aviation, marine and energy sectors

The challenge: provide standardized resources to users in any location

Weather happens everywhere, often in unpredictable ways, so The Weather Channel has to be far-reaching and dynamic in its coverage. This poses significant challenges for IT. Beyond providing management and back-office personnel with business applications, the company must enable producers and reporters in every part of the country and on the road to access high-end video and editorial systems at a moment’s notice. While reporting on the weather, the company remains as vulnerable to its impact as any company.

“Our broadcasting and web operations are 24 x 7, and if there’s a severe weather crisis, they might not be able to get in to an office,” says Andy Drooker, senior director of emerging platforms/technologies at The Weather Channel. “We wanted them to be able to work from home or the road just as effectively as at the office.”

But even within the company’s offices, conditions weren’t ideal. Freelancers and employees competed to use the newest computers. Workers often



needed additional software or RAM to complete projects, but with just one technician per 150 users, they sometimes had to wait.

Drooker was attending a Microsoft TechEd Conference when he came up with a solution to the company's challenges: pairing the free Microsoft Hyper-V virtualization solution, which was included under the company's Microsoft licenses, with the Citrix XenDesktop® desktop virtualization solution. "It was exactly what we were looking for," says Drooker. "We wanted a homogeneous desktop in the newsroom, so everybody would be looking at the same content within the same applications. With desktop virtualization, we can pool applications—including both internal and external resources—and deploy virtual desktops to users either on a one-to-one basis, or as a pool of virtual desktops for folks to log into and use." Desktop virtualization offered a way to standardize The Weather Channel's computing environment, centralize desktop management and increase IT efficiency, and promised to enable delivery of full, office-level resources to workers in any location.

Key benefits

- Ensured 24 x 7 operations even during weather emergencies
- Enabled remote work styles and improved work-life balance for users
- Reduced hardware costs for high-end video applications and desktop refreshes
- Improved data and application security through centralized management
- Powered IT to support large, distributed workforce with dynamic user requirements

Applications delivered

- Avid iNEWS Newsroom Computer System (NRCS)
- Adobe Photoshop
- Microsoft Office

Virtualizing desktops and applications with Citrix XenDesktop and Microsoft Hyper-V

XenDesktop integrated seamlessly with the Microsoft Hyper-V stack, and Drooker put together a proof of concept with CentriNet, a Platinum Citrix and Gold Microsoft V-Alliance partner based in Atlanta. Dario Ferreira, VP of Technology at CentriNet, worked with The Weather Channel throughout the PoC process. "The POC let people see for themselves the benefits of the virtual desktop model: the savings, ease of management and ability to have their desktop on any device, anywhere," says Ferreira.

In the PoC, Drooker and his team delivered virtual desktops tailored to the needs of 65 workers in every part of the enterprise. Administrative personnel were provided with access to Microsoft Office applications; producers and reporters accessed standardized newswriting and video production tools on-demand.

Ensuring both business continuity and a good work-life balance

By enabling The Weather Channel to deliver a full virtual desktop on demand to any user, in any location, even over limited bandwidth, Citrix helps The Weather Channel ensure uninterrupted operations while allowing ample flexibility for users. "Employees can get their jobs done more easily and efficiently, and gain the freedom to work at home as effectively as they can in the office," comments Drooker. "No matter where they are, the Citrix solution enables them to access all the resources they need to work, and even delivers the performance to edit video, produce stories and update the company's website."

Improving IT efficiency and speed through centralized management

Citrix XenDesktop helps The Weather Channel's small IT staff deliver responsive support to hundreds of widely dispersed users. IT can make new applications available almost instantly. When a user needs additional memory or processing power to complete a job, the IT team can deliver

the resources in minutes—even across the country. And if a laptop malfunctions, IT can upgrade it dynamically, or the user can work from any other end-point device for continued productivity. IT no longer needs to ship machines back and forth to headquarters for repair, so the company no longer runs the risk of loss, theft or damage in transit. The endpoint device no longer matters much. “It can be an old, beat-up machine—as long as users have a connected browser and a thin-PC OS on it, they can access the corporate resources they need. And we don’t have to worry about security issues,” says Drooker.

Reducing cost of ownership

By enabling a high-definition experience on any computer, even for graphics-intensive video and editing software, Citrix has eliminated the need for frequent hardware refreshes. The Weather Channel leverages Citrix HDX™ and Microsoft RemoteFX technology to accelerate performance for multiple users on their VDI-based desktops on Microsoft Hyper-V Server. “I don’t need to spend money on high-end graphics cards for every workstation any more,” says Drooker. “Instead, I put high-end NVIDIA graphics cards in my servers and deliver high-definition video to any number of users, even on thin clients.”

With its proof of concept complete, The Weather Channel is now moving to deploy Citrix-powered virtual desktops across its entire workforce. “People are already calling me wanting to get on virtual desktops,” says Drooker. “We’re achieving high value for our users at a minimal ownership cost, and we’re excited to be moving forward.”

Networking environment

- Citrix XenDesktop
- Citrix HDX RichGraphics with RemoteFX
- Microsoft Hyper-V
- Microsoft RemoteFX
- Microsoft Windows Server 2008



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About Citrix

Citrix Systems, Inc. (NASDAQ:CTXS) is a leading provider of virtual computing solutions that help people work and play from anywhere on any device. More than 230,000 enterprises rely on Citrix to create better ways for people, IT and business to work through virtual meetings, desktops and datacenters. Citrix virtualization, networking and cloud solutions deliver over 100 million corporate desktops and touch 75 percent of Internet users each day. Citrix partners with over 10,000 companies in 100 countries. Annual revenue in 2010 was \$1.87 billion.

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