



CPA Australia. One of the World's Leading Accountancy Bodies Implements Global Solution Using Wyse Thin Client Technology.

Customer:

- CPA Australia
- 16 offices worldwide
- 440 users

Challenges:

- Standardising IT hardware across all 16 offices worldwide.
- Streamlining and delivering IT support to all global offices from the technical centre in Melbourne, Australia.
- Reduce operational and hardware replacement costs.

Results:

- Users have a Standard Operating Environment with their own desktop and applications accessible from anywhere.
- Updates are done with the touch of a button from the technical centre in Melbourne.
- 20% saving in operational costs, 40% saving on hardware costs and support calls dropped by 60%

Applications:

- Microsoft Office including Email
- IMIS incorporating the phone-in call centre application
- iManager by Interwoven

Server:

- IBM Blade Servers running Citrix Presentation Server version 4.5
- User Environment Manager by AppSense

Network:

- WAN

Solution:

- 440 Wyse Thin Clients running the Linux Operating System

CPA Australia replaces PCs in 16 global and local offices with Wyse and reports up to a 40% cost saving.

The Customer: CPA Australia

CPA Australia is the name for the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants, initially incorporated in 1952 with roots going back to the 1880s.

With a current membership of more than 112,000 finance, accounting and business professionals around Australia and internationally, CPA Australia is the sixth largest accounting body in the world and was the first accounting body in the world to require a degree for entry. Members must also complete a CPA Public Practice Program which involves distance learning and a residential component to become a Certified Practising Accountant.

Interestingly, overseas members now comprise over 14% of CPA Australia membership and that number appears to be increasing rapidly. The overseas work commenced in the late 1950s as part of the Colombo Plan in South East Asia, extending to fully operational divisional offices opening in 1985 in Hong Kong, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Further demand by practicing accountants globally has driven the CPA to extend their office network to New Zealand, London, Japan, Port Moresby, Fiji, Indonesia, and throughout China.

CPA Australia's vision is to ensure that members with CPA accreditation are the first choice of employers and clients, and are valued by the community and peers. Education, training, technical support and advocacy are the core services for members. Staff and members work with local and international bodies to represent the views and concerns of the profession to federal, state and territory governments and to regulators, industry academia and the general public.

How to Best Serve Members With IT World Wide?

Like all businesses undergoing rapid expansion CPA Australia encountered problems in effectively communicating with, and supporting, its Australian branch office network and international operation.

How best to align IT to CPA Australia's business needs was the biggest challenge facing operations manager David Camilleri when he joined CPA Australia late in 2005. With 16 branches supported by a central IT group in Melbourne, David found the organisation was not being served well by its existing IT infrastructure.

"In early 2006 we started looking at thin client suppliers and settled on Wyse S50 devices. Wyse is a household name in thin client and the clear market leader. The references they were able to provide were excellent."

David Camilleri
Operations Manager - CPA

"When I joined CPA Australia I found a "head office and the rest" concept in place. The entire network was PC based with the branches getting the head office leftovers," said David. "It was clear to me that IT was not aligned to the business needs of CPA Australia. Users disliked the autocratic approach of the IT unit at that time and were frustrated by the continuous support issues caused by the use of PCs. With a true global operation it was becoming increasingly difficult to harmonise and support various PCs with non standard operating environments.

David was told clearly by users that IT was 'on the nose' - a disliked business unit that was not servicing and performing. David went back to his prior experience at financial company IOOF, and looked closely at thin client technology to save the situation.

Was Thin Computing the Answer?

CPA Australia had previously dabbled with thin client and Citrix using the existing PCs as the thin devices without success. They quickly found that without managing the implementation holistically, from a grass roots basis, the thin client proposal would fail.

"Previous fragmented efforts of a trial Citrix implementation only caused more unrest amongst users. My experience at IOOF clearly showed that for a thin client implementation to work successfully you must start with the basics and align the whole IT infrastructure to support the business needs."

"However I was convinced that in early 2006, thin client was ideal for CPA Australia, and I convinced the board that if we tackled the job properly we would see great benefits and cost savings. The board agreed to totally rebuild our infrastructure; new data centre, servers, WAN, and of course replacing most PCs with thin clients."

David did meet some opposition and distrust from users who had a negative experience with CPA's initial trial of thin client solutions, plus many users were so disappointed with IT services in the past that the project started somewhat under a cloud. "It was fair to say not all users were on our side."

The Process

David started the project by first understanding what the organisations business objectives were going forward and devising a Citrix based thin client solution that would assist the company to meet these objectives. "We locked in a policy based plan before we started the implementation stage," David said.

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The Wyse S50 is a small, Linux Kernel 2.6-based thin client device that offers true 'stateless' technology allowing users to plug and play. It has one serial and four SSB ports, a fanless design with no moving parts.

CPA Australia started rolling out the new solution in early 2006, firstly with the 16 local and overseas divisions, and lastly in early 2007, the Melbourne head office.

"Our early planning work really paid off," said David. "We encountered almost no issues, we had instant success, and Wyse was a great help."

“The experience with thin computing has shown us all that considerable savings can be made in electricity and other running costs. Thin client definitely cuts down on energy costs.”

*David Camilleri
Operations Manager - CPA*

The System

The entire system runs on Citrix Presentation Server 4.5, running on IBM blade servers all situated in CPA Australia’s Melbourne head office. All up 440 Wyse S50 thin client terminals were deployed in Australia and overseas, with 120 notebooks being used as portable thin client terminals. 60 PCs are still used for some very intensive graphics applications such as PhotoShop.

CPA Australia runs Email and Microsoft Office applications on the Citrix system as well as the iMIS not-for-profit member relationship software incorporating the phone-in call centre application, and iManage document manager from Interwoven.

One of the interesting developments coming from David’s work is the efficiencies seen at the data centre. “One of the past criticisms of thin client is that the cost savings at the desktop are negated by increased costs in servers and support at the data centre. This is not CPA’s experience.”

“We put a lot of effort into server consolidation and efficiency from day one we fine tuned the applications to minimize server load. Of particular help was the use of User Environment Manager from AppSense Ltd that manages user profiles and optimizes hardware resources and blocks rogue applications. Also thin provisioning on the server storage enabled us to have capacity available from a virtual pool of storage. Initial tests gave us around 15 users per server but after AppSense software was installed and virtualisation enabled, we are seeing double that - 30 users per server, a fantastic saving at both ends,” said David.

CPA Australia also beefed up the data centre and WAN to implement the best in disaster recovery and security, as well as fail-over communication links.

The Results

As reported above, the project was a success in the implementation stage, finishing in early 2007. Since then CPA Australia has assembled enough data to report on the operational results, and it certainly shows how successful thin client can be, especially on a global scale.

“Firstly, we have successfully created a standard operating environment for all users, with full control coming from the technical centre in Melbourne giving all users a standard operating environment. All users have their own standard desktop with applications following users around the world, just log in and you are at home.”

“Next, support costs have dramatically reduced. The lack of non standard PCs, disks on the desk and virus and rogue programs means we do not need technical staff in the field to support the Wyse thin clients. Should a device fail, we just have the user pop in a new one from the cupboard and they are back on line. No data can be lost and security is 100%”

“Lastly we have dramatically reduced upgrade costs as all are done at the touch of a button from Melbourne.”

“Metrics show that to date we have saved 20% overall on operational costs and 40% on hardware costs, and support calls have dropped 60% in just a few months, management is delighted. We expect cost savings to dramatically increase over a longer time period.”

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The Future

"Thin Computing is going through a period of exciting development," said David. "We are closely looking at new developments such as streaming and desktop virtualisation that would enable more applications to be used by the Wyse devices. The more we can use thin computing technology the better."

"Management at CPA Australia is also embarking on a sustainability project, looking at energy cost savings across the whole enterprise. The experience with thin computing has shown us all that considerable savings can be made in electricity and other running costs. Thin client definitely cuts down on energy costs."

Commenting on behalf of Wyse, Richard Eccles southern region manager said. "David and his team are to be congratulated on their results at CPA. Their strong belief in thin client technology and its value to the enterprise has certainly been vindicated."

Conclusion

Perhaps the single biggest benefit from CPA Australia's journey into thin computing, and certainly the most rewarding for David personally has been the turnaround in users strong feelings about IT.

"A recent survey showed IT as the most useful department to our users; they see that we now give them a reliable business performance tool. We are getting one to one with each user and giving them the enhancements they need."

"They love us, we are now partners."



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