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Nonprofit Lifeworks Achieves Successful Microsoft Office 365 Deployment with the Help of FSLogix

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When Lifeworks decided to deploy Microsoft Office 365, the nonprofit encountered some unforeseen challenges. To facilitate a non-persistent virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI), Lifeworks needed a way to roam critical Office 365 data files when users logged into fresh desktops each day. With the help of FSLogix, Lifeworks was able to do so and is achieving a list of benefits such as improved end-user productivity through near-time searches and leveraging new capabilities such as OneDrive. The nonprofit anticipates further benefits when OneNote is added. Lifeworks also enhanced its backup-and-recovery capabilities with snapshotting of FSLogix caches.

HIGHLIGHTS

> Ensured successful rollout of Microsoft Office 365
> Centralized Outlook OST files to enable them to roam with users
> Improved end-user productivity by enabling fast, easy searches
> Achieving benefits of centralized file management with OneDrive and anticipated benefits of digital notebook with OneNote

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DON BECCHETTI, DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, LIFEWORKS

Cool Facts About Lifeworks

Organization: Nonprofit
Mission: "Serve our community and people with disabilities as we live and work together."
Founded: 1965
Business Partnerships: 300
Individuals Served: 2,500
Individuals Working: 600
Website: www.lifeworks.org

Challenges

> Ensure successful, fully optimized Microsoft Office 365 deployment
> Deploy a secure, non-persistent desktop from a single image with full functionality
> Enable fast indexing and searches
> Deliver benefits of OneDrive and OneNote to end users

Solution

> FSLogix Office 365 Container
> Microsoft Office 365
> Citrix XenApp and XenDesktop
> Citrix Provisioning Services

Lifeworks is a fixture in Minnesota. Founded in 1965, the nonprofit serves the state's communities by empowering people with disabilities to be more broadly valued, gain and maintain employment, receive support, and participate in ordinary activities.

Lifeworks' services break into three different categories: 1) day services for adults with disabilities help them connect to the community, engage with their peers, and utilize technologies, 2) employment services that help those with disabilities (currently around 850 individuals) to find and keep jobs at nearly 300 businesses in the Twin Cities and Mankato area, and 3) fiscal support that provides assistance such as Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS), Consumer Support Grant (CSG), PCA Choice, and personal support.

VIRTUALIZED DESKTOPS WITH CITRIX

When it comes to managing operations and delivering its services, Lifeworks relies on a virtualized desktop infrastructure running on Citrix XenApp and will be adding XenDesktop later this year. "The endpoint is irrelevant for us," says Don Becchetti, the director of Information Technology at Lifeworks. "We make use of many different endpoints—Windows desktops and laptops and various Mac devices. We don't deliver applications to the endpoint directly, but rather we deliver them to a very controlled, centrally managed desktop running on a server." With one tightly controlled base image, Lifeworks reduces its total cost of ownership (TCO) while maintaining uniform and consistent endpoint security controls and processes.

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To make this possible, Lifeworks relies on Citrix Provisioning Services to spin up new desktops daily. "There's no static data sets," Becchetti notes. "We maintain non-persistent desktops that change every morning and run without any local storage." In total, Lifeworks supports around 300 virtualized desktops—250 employees and another 50 or so for volunteers and other personnel.

OFFICE 365 CENTRALIZED CACHING

Late last year, Lifeworks decided to move to Microsoft Office 365. "We wanted to reap the benefits of Exchange and OneDrive," Becchetti says. "OneDrive replaces personal folders, plus it lays the groundwork for SharePoint adoption."

But when Lifeworks got ready to launch the Microsoft Office 365 implementation at the beginning of the year, Becchetti and his team ran into a problem. "Office 365 needed to cache locally," he says. But for the above reasons, Lifeworks didn't want to do so. "Our investigation of Office 365 quickly found that we would need to go through a lot of contortions to make it work. What we really needed was a way to get Office 365 into thinking that it is writing to a local drive but, in reality, it's writing to a centralized file share."

An independent consultant who had worked with Lifeworks on various Citrix architectural and implementation issues over the years suggested to Becchetti that he and his team look at FSLogix. "He had previous experience using FSLogix and told us that its Office 365 Container would address all of our requirements," Becchetti remembers. "His recommendation was spot on."

Lifeworks elected to use FSLogix for its Office 365 deployment from the very start. "From what I understand from FSLogix, many FSLogix customers discover the solution after the fact—after suffering through the pain of local caching," Becchetti says. "We wanted to do it right immediately out of the gate."

FSLOGIX DELIVERS AS PROMISED— AND MORE

FSLogix is delivering just as promised. Centralizing Office 365 data so that it follows users between sessions enables Lifeworks to maintain a low infrastructure TCO and endpoint risk posture. "Having our systems boot from the same base image every day allows us to avoid configuration drift," Becchetti says. "FSLogix gives us the benefits of local caching in this scenario without any sacrifice to security or image management."

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With Exchange messages growing at faster rates than expected, Lifeworks quickly found that Office 365 backup capabilities were insufficient. Becchetti and his team found the answer in FSLogix. "We take a snapshot of the FSLogix containers at the SAN level, and we also back them up using Volume Shadow Services," he explains. "We can quickly and easily recover Exchange data or OneDrive data in the event of an issue."

User searches is another area where Lifeworks is seeing substantial advantages. Historically, Lifeworks didn't perform caching, and thus searches were always slow. "End users noticed the difference right away when we started moving them to Office 365 and FSLogix," Becchetti reports. "What used to take 10, 15, or 20 seconds, now takes a second or two. They click, they search, and the results are returned almost immediately. And these same search capabilities in Exchange are also available in OneDrive."

Microsoft OneDrive adds a completely new dimension for Lifeworks' users. "With OneDrive, they can now store and access their files in a central location that can be accessed regardless of the device they use," Becchetti says. "Plus, we know these files are safe, encrypted and secured in one location."

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Becchetti is excited about adding more components from the FSLogix product suite in the future. App Masking is one area where he sees value. "We have a small segment of Microsoft Dynamics SL users, and another group using the full suite from Adobe," he notes. "App Masking would allow us to deliver those applications to only the users who need them. At the same time, we are able to keep a single base image."

Following on the successful launch of OneDrive, Becchetti and his team plan to add Microsoft OneNote later this year. "Our users never had the ability to gather information in a multi-user collaborative environment," he notes. "OneNote is amazing, and our users are very excited about its forthcoming deployment."

FSLogix Cloud Cache is something that interests Becchetti as well. "We can store profile containers in multiple locations at the same time and keep them all in synch," he describes. "In our case, this means we could store profile containers in the cloud and on-premises—giving us a means for restoring from either."

Lifeworks' experience with FSLogix has been very positive. "FSLogix has been a big part of our Office

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365 rollout," Becchetti sums up. "We've had very few technical problems and laid the foundation for a roadmap of additional successes as we begin using SharePoint and OneDrive, which are part of a larger document management project that we're rolling out this year. We're very pleased with our decision to go with FSLogix."

ABOUT FSLOGIX

FSLogix is the leading innovator of solutions that reduce the amount of hardware, time, and labor required to support desktop virtualization platforms. With implementations ranging from less than 1,000 to over 50,000 users, FSLogix Apps enhances user experience and productivity, while reducing support requirements for IT departments. FSLogix is a Microsoft partner, Amazon Workspaces partner, VMware partner, Citrix Ready partner, Red Hat partner, two time Best of Synergy winner, CUGC Alumni, and a first-year sponsor of the CUGC Women in Technology Mentoring program. The company is headquartered in Atlanta, GA, with offices in Salt Lake City, Denver, Boston, the Netherlands, and London, England. For more information, visit www.fslogix.com.