Enabling a Mobile Workforce

European government organization goes mobile to boost service levels for its citizens

A department within French regional government saved time and money while improving service levels for its citizens by unifying their user experience across desktop, smartphones and tablets, with Windows 8.1 and devices powered by Intel® processors.

This local government organization based in a mountainous region of central France, provides 150,000 people with services that include road maintenance, education and welfare. With a population that is thinly spread across remote regions, the council has seen firsthand the power of technology to help its geographically dispersed employees react quickly to addressing the needs and demands of its citizens to deliver the necessary services.

The Situation

The conseil général or elected general council prides itself on being an early adopter of information and communication technologies (ICT), believing it to be essential to providing high quality services across a challenging geography. As such, it wanted to increase mobility for council employees, reduce costs, and deploy digital services more quickly.

However, the council's ability to quickly adopt new technologies was constrained by the mix of operating systems that was in use at its 50 sites. Half of its 800 desktops ran the Microsoft Windows XP operating system, which was approaching end-of-life, and the remainder ran Windows 7. Maintaining this mix of operating systems demanded two full-time ICT managers out of a 20-person ICT staff, and made deploying new applications more time-consuming.

The Solution

The council decided to equip remote staff with an operating system designed for mobile touchscreen devices, allowing it to add a mobile element to its current ICT strategy. If road engineers had tablets with integrated photo, email, voice-calling, and location capabilities, they could respond instantly and comprehensively when they discovered road damage. The council also wanted to try a "bring-your-own-device" policy, so that employees could work seamlessly on council business with their own smartphone or tablet.

By enlisting the experience and services of Sogeti as its ICT partner, the council became one of the first in France to upgrade to Windows 8.1, the only operating system that would allow them to unify user experience across computer, smartphone and tablet. This would require upgrading or replacing all 800 desktops while rolling out mobile devices to all staff that needed them.

The council opted for hardware built on Intel processors and architecture, which would be powerful and robust enough to run full versions of the Windows 8.1 operating system on both desktops and tablets.

The Results

Council employees are now able to react more quickly and effectively to citizens' requests and their ability to work 'on the go' with complete continuity across multiple devices has thereby improved service levels. The council is also now in a position to reduce long-term ICT costs while improving the efficiency of all of its employees because standardizing its systems to Windows 8.1 means it is better able to digitize administrative procedures.

The power and responsiveness of the Intel platform allows the council to get the most from Windows 8.1's security and remote manageability capabilities, further improving efficiencies and reducing the total cost of ownership of devices. Since all devices – from desktops to tablets – are running full versions of Windows, the council did not have to add new or different support tools to manage and secure its devices. Furthermore, they can provide a consistent user interface that all users are familiar with.

Upgrading all 800 desktops took less than three months and new deployments now take half the time, because the Microsoft System Center 2012 Configuration Manager and Windows 8.1 provides the council with a completely interoperable environment that can be managed automatically with one tool. Simultaneously, desktop maintenance has been reduced by 80 percent, saving time that is now spent improving processes and creating more mobile capabilities for council employees.

The council also needs 80 percent fewer physical servers due to a combination of increased confidence in the stability of the council's operating system environment and more efficient memory utilization.

And, on the ground, the tablets are making a huge difference. These devices have enabled road engineers to react instantly when they detect damage – pinpointing their location, informing the local police, taking photos, and sending photo assessments to repair teams. Water-treatment staff also stand to benefit from being able to instantly upload test results to council file shares.

How Sogeti worked with the customer

The Windows 8.1 and Intel ecosystem is vast, including many different device types and form factors. However, Sogeti's deep understanding of the Windows product portfolio and of the council's unique demands meant it was able to help the customer choose the best solution based on their exact requirements.

Sogeti and council ICT specialists used the Microsoft Assessment and Planning Toolkit 2013 to analyze hardware and software compatibility, and identify which desktops could be upgraded and which needed to be replaced. Next, Sogeti set up a virtual test environment to test Windows 8.1 with the council's desktops, networks, and applications using Microsoft System Center 2012 Configuration Manager.

With each upgrade, the council and Sogeti organize a 1.5-hour demonstration for employees to help them familiarize themselves with labor-saving Windows 8.1 features, including the customizable 'Start' screen and the ability to synchronize settings across multiple devices that run Windows 8.1.

Finally, Sogeti was able to devise a zero-touch implementation for the majority of desktops that allowed it to upgrade 30 devices at a time overnight. Although remote sites required a personal visit, a Windows 8.1 upgrade USB (Universal Serial Bus) device minimized any disruption to council operations.

Learn more about how Sogeti can connect your workforce! Contact Darren Baker at darren.baker@sogeti.com