

Challenger reaps numerous returns on its FSLogix investment

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- Jeremy Brennan
Infrastructure Operations Manager, Challenger



Australian-based annuities and life insurance provider Challenger Limited ran into some snags when migrating to Microsoft Windows 10. Its previous virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) environment ran a single golden image, something the Challenger team was unable to roll over to the Windows 10 environment. Users also encountered ongoing corruption issues that prompted them to reenter user names and passwords for Office 365 apps, had to wait upwards of three minutes or more for new VDI instances to load when logging in, and were frustrated that they lacked cached-mode access to Office 365 and OneDrive. With the help of FSLogix, Challenger addressed these challenges, enabling the company and its staff to begin realising the full value of the new Windows 10 environment.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1** Optimised profile creation with a click of the button
- 2** Eliminated profile corruption that was occurring with AppSense
- 3** Enhanced user productivity by enabling offline Office 365 and OneDrive access
- 4** Improved VDI management by returning to single golden image management
- 5** Better user experience & increased productivity by reducing log-in time from average of three minutes to 20 seconds

CHALLENGER LIMITED

EMPLOYEES

Approx 800

FOUNDED

1985

ASSETS MANAGED

\$70M (as of June 30, 2017)

HEADQUARTERS

Sydney, Australia

CORE INVESTMENT BUSINESSES

Fiduciary Funds Management and APRA-regulated Life Division

PORTFOLIO HIGHLIGHTS

Includes Challenger Life, Australia's largest provider of annuities

Challenger Limited has helped hundreds of thousands of Australians achieve their retirement dreams through sound investment strategies over the past 30-plus years. The company has offices in virtually every major Australian city as well as offices in Tokyo, London, Copenhagen, and the United States.

SOLUTION DETAILS

WINDOWS 10 MIGRATIONS HITS SNAGS

About a year and a half ago, the IT Infrastructure team at Challenger embarked on an initiative to migrate its desktop infrastructure from Microsoft Windows 7 to Windows 10. “Our Windows 7 was a fairly convoluted environment, consisting of physical and virtual servers and various versions of Citrix XenDesktop,” says Adrian Brugger, solutions architect for the Infrastructure Operations Group at Challenger. “We sought a strategic approach where we could tap the full potential of Windows 10 such as OneDrive and Office 365.”

But as Challenger began delving into the details of the migration, the team started to encounter various challenges such as the inability to run Outlook or OneDrive in online mode. Jeremy Brennan, who manages the Infrastructure Operations team at Challenger, had met FSLogix at an industry event about a year before and was familiar with the capabilities FSLogix can deliver for virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) environments.

“FSLogix checked the boxes we had on our list of challenges,” Brennan says. “It is a proven technology and has a very acceptable price point.” For its Windows 7 environment, Challenger relied on AppSense for image management but elected to go with FSLogix for the new Windows 10 environment. “The time for logging into profiles simply took longer than what we wanted with AppSense,”

Brugger says. “AppSense is architected differently and it requires more processing when onboarding a new app. This gave rise to potential profile corruption and settings that simply didn’t get captured.”

The primary objective Challenger wanted to achieve with FSLogix was a single golden image. “Up until the Citrix App Layering (previously UniDesk) deployment, we had a single image,” Brugger reports. “A key selling point for FSLogix was that we could run Outlook in cache mode with a OneDrive local cache. Our users couldn’t access their search index when they were roaming, and they were becoming increasingly frustrated.”

Users also found that their settings were degrading over time. “We wouldn’t lose entire profiles very often,” Brugger relates. “But we were seeing little bits and pieces disappear over time. It would take users five or six months before they became annoyed enough to call the support desk to complain.”

For the acquisition of FSLogix, Challenger turned to FSLogix Partner Insentra. “Starting with the initial acquisition of FSLogix Profile Container and then with the subsequent addition of other FSLogix modules, Insentra has been very responsive to our business requirements,” Brennan relates.



CHALLENGES

- Facilitate migration to Microsoft Windows 10
- Run Microsoft Outlook and OneDrive in online mode
- Remediate profile corruption issues with AppSense
- Shrink log-in times from minutes to seconds

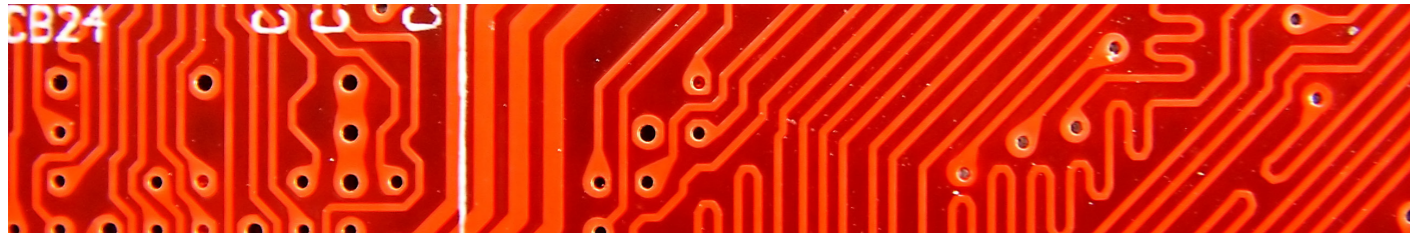
SOLUTION

- FSLogix Profile Container
- FSLogix App Masking
- FSLogix Office 365 Container
- FSLogix Partner: Insentra



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Adrian Brugger, Solutions Architect
Infrastructure Group, Challenger



CITRIX APP LAYERING SUPPLEMENTED WITH FSLOGIX PROFILE CONTAINER

Challenger initially began its migration journey using Citrix App Layering to create the Windows 10 images. “It allows us to create or export images at our leisure with numerous variations,” Brugger notes. “But with FSLogix Profile Container, we’re able to go well beyond the rudimentary profiles component in App Layering. App Layering simply wouldn’t scale to support our needs.”

“As we’re a Microsoft shop, we have countless numbers of Excel and Word add-ins,” Brennan comments. “This results in any number of combinations and permutations to our end users, which is a minor headache when it comes to application packaging.” Hence, once Challenger had Profile Container in place, they turned to see how FSLogix might be able to help tackle this additional challenge. “Citrix App-V application isolation is really difficult to do,” Brugger explains. “We were able to establish profiles with FSLogix, making applications appear and disappear with a click of a button.”

Before FSLogix Profile Container was implemented, users experienced up to three-minute log-in times. Now, with FSLogix, those log-in times shrank to 15 or 20 seconds. Though some users go up to a month between log-in times, others log into their accounts daily. “Needing to wait on systems to load was a nuisance and productivity drain for those users,” Brugger says.

APP-V ELIMINATED WITH APP MASKING

Challenger not only elected to implement Profile Container from FSLogix, but the company also added App Masking and Office 365 Container early this year. “This simplified management of our VDI environment,” Brennan says. “Combined with Profile Container, App Masking has enabled us to reduce the size of our images.”

Today, Challenger has approximately 40 different rules in place, along with some redirection. “We’ve gotten back to a single golden image by masking the bulk of applications for each user with App Masking,” Brugger continues. “We also eliminated the need for App-V, which simplifies management of our VDI environment. Rather than releasing software from our images, we place our application containers onto the network and swap out the applications that are being updated.”



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Another important addition with the migration to Windows 10 was Office 365. “We’re using Outlook in cache mode, though it is with on-premise Microsoft Exchange,” Brugger says. “We also use it for indexing and for some instances where we are using OneDrive.” FSLogix Office 365 Container helps us deliver real-time Office 365 experiences to our users, including when they are remote.”

The use of FSLogix Office 365 Container also gives Challenger the ability to deliver better user experiences, which results in enhanced productivity. “One area where we’ve seen positive outcomes is in mismatches between external and internal domains,” Brennan says. “These forced users to type in their user name and password to reactivate Office 365. While these interruptions only took a few seconds, they also happen at inopportune times. FSLogix Office 365 Profile Container solved all of those.”

As adoption of OneDrive becomes more ubiquitous, the value of FSLogix Office 365 Profile Container will become accentuated even further. “We’re excited about the opportunities FSLogix offers us to expand our business,” Brennan sums up. “It has been an excellent decision for us.”

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Jeremy Brennan
Infrastructure Operations
Manager, Challenger

ABOUT INSENTRA

Insentra is a collaborative IT Services partner delivering a range of specialised Professional and Managed Services, technology solutions and products to clients around the globe, transacting exclusively through the IT channel.

We augment end user capabilities, give partners pre-sales assistance, provide services which the IT channel cannot deliver and help Independent Software Vendors accelerate channel growth through geographical expansion.

Our partner-centric business model provides our partners and their clients with access to industry expertise, skilled consultants, unique technology solutions and accountable outcomes.

Our people are talented, innovative and driven by a relentless determination to deliver exceptional service to our clients.