

Virtual desktops offer Neovia Logistics a new way to work

Seeking Cost saving and productivity gains, Neovia Logistics elected to implement a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) solution running in Citrix XenApp. When the team encountered a series of challenges, they turned to FSLogix App 2.0 for the solution. Once their deployment and rollout is complete, they will have collapsed 12 images into one unified image, reduced their server count by approximately 25 percent and generated tens of millions of dollars in employee productivity gains.

“The fact there is no back-end infrastructure required for implementing FSLogix was a compelling factor in Neovia’s decision to go with the solution, explains Bill Flink, Neovia Logistics SR. Citrix Engineer. When the logistics division of Caterpillar Inc. spun off to form a separately held entity in 2012, they chose the name Neovia Logistics for a reason. As the Latin word Neovia means a new path, and the team wanted to offer customers a new way of thinking about how logistics can help a business grow. Indeed, the spinoff from Caterpillar offered Neovia an opportunity to rethink its operations across the board. Consolidating its vast IT infrastructure was one of the areas Neovia pinpointed. “With 148 global office locations on six continents, virtualising and centralising our data centres into one location offered huge opportunities,” recalls Hector Cortez, a Citrix architect and engineer at Neovia. “Previously, every location had its own server or servers.”



We have multiregional requirements for different application plugins and management of those prior to FSLogix was a big mess”

Hector Cortez, Citrix Architect and Engineer
Neovia Logistics

The desktop infrastructure was part of the larger consolidation plan a team of consultants from IBM and Citrix helped Neovia to develop. “We sought to go from a desktop architecture consisting of decentralised images residing on desktops and laptops across the company to a centralised virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI),” Cortez says. “The prior environment required a team of 12 system administrators to manage. The combination of Citrix XenApp and FSLogix shrank this down to two senior architects — Bill Flink and myself.”

Migration to a VDI environment running on Citrix XenServer and XenApp commenced about two years ago. Fully deployed about a year and a half ago, the VDI project provided Neovia the ability to manage a global desktop infrastructure with limited staff. Almost 5,000 staff, or about 3,500 concurrent sessions, are supported by the VDI environment today.

VDI CHALLENGES

But the Neovia team encountered some challenges.

One involved a concurrent decision to migrate from Lotus Notes to Microsoft Office 365. “We started seeing a lot of performance degradation for our users,” Cortez remembers. “Nearly half of our users had bloated profiles and experienced a lot of profile corruption. In addition to creating user frustration, this also impacted their productivity, while also creating more remediation work for our team and our service provider.”

Another challenge involved the need for a Microsoft Outlook and SharePoint plugin for about 60 users. “But we couldn’t include it in the same image as our other users due to the fact that it impacted performance,” says Flink, who initially served as a consultant to Neovia and joined the company as senior Citrix

engineer about eight months ago. “Had we included this plugin in our primary image, then it would have been active for all sessions, with a significant performance impact that would have adversely affected all of them.”

To avoid this scenario, Neovia created a separate application image for these 60 users. “This required the allocation of three additional servers, plus the time and resources needed to manage both them and the golden image residing on them,” Flink says. “This added up to a significant time and capital expenditure.” In total, with over 300 applications supported and disparate user requirements, Neovia created a total of five other application images. Each of these required dedicated server farms and ongoing management and provisioning, contributing to both complexity and cost.

“Without FSLogix, it could take users between three and five minutes to log onto their systems at the beginning of the day. This is very frustrating for users and a big time sink”

Bill Flink
SR Citrix Engineer, Neovia Logistics



FSLOGIX APPS PROFILE CONTAINERS MAKE HUGE DIFFERENCE

When Flink joined Neovia as a full-time member of the team, Cortez and he looked at FSLogix as a possible solution to the different VDI challenges. “The fact that there is no back-end infrastructure required for implementing FSLogix was a compelling factor in Neovia’s decision to go with the solution,” Flink observes. “Since we use a service provider to manage our IT infrastructure, any changes on the backend are difficult.”

Flink and Cortez started with a proof of concept to test and demonstrate the validity of the FSLogix Apps Profile Containers. “We started with our office in Irving, Texas and our biggest client in the United Kingdom, where we have about 500 staff,” Flink reports. Part of the initiative also included collapsing the application image used for the special

Outlook-SharePoint plugin into one of the other four silos. This produced immediate time and cost savings, as the three servers dedicated to that application image were reallocated.

For hardware costs alone, this amounted to about \$5,000 annually. The next phase of the FSLogix rollout addressed the company’s developer environment, which consists of about 500 users. “This eliminated one more of our image silos,” Cortez says. “Our next phase, which we anticipate will start in a few weeks, is to integrate all of our users in the Americas. The final phase will tackle our remaining users and application images.” Once the FSLogix deployment is complete, Flink and Cortez estimate they will be able to shrink their VDI server farm by 25 percent, or by 50 servers.

FSLOGIX APPS PROFILE CONTAINERS MAKE HUGE DIFFERENCE

The impact on Office 365 performance has been very noticeable for users running FSLogix. “The time adds up when you consider delays of several seconds for the time needed to open each email,” Cortez says. “And this doesn’t include ‘system lockups’ where users click on large attachments and need to close and reopen Outlook 2013.” The business impact on end-user productivity is tangible. Cortez and Flink estimate as much as six minutes of time savings per user daily. Once the solution is rolled out to all 5,000 users, productivity gains will equate to 125,000 hours or \$7.5 million annually.

Another area where FSLogix is poised to deliver added value for Neovia is user log-on times. “Without FSLogix, it takes users between three and five minutes to log onto their systems at the beginning of the day,” Flink indicates.

“This is very frustrating for users and a big time sink.” However, with FSLogix, Flink and Cortez see log-on times around 15 seconds. This creates a consistent user experience while improving user productivity. As with the results around Office 365, the business impact of FSLogix—once it is fully deployed—are dramatic: 57,000 hours or \$3.43 million annually in productivity gains.

Management of application plugins was also an ongoing headache for Neovia Logistics. “We have a lot of regional requirements that translate into numerous plugins for Java and SSL tokens as well as applications such as Microsoft Office and Excel,” Cortez notes. “It was truly a big mess. FSLogix fixes all of this. We are able to manage one unified image while users see only the applications and plugins they are authorised to see.”

PAVING THE NEW VDI PATH

Flink and Cortez are quite satisfied with the results they have achieved thus far. “FSLogix is a valuable tool, helping to pave our new VDI path,” Flink observes.

Cortez continues: “FSLogix is quite easy to implement and intuitive to use. The actual implementation for our initial project phase took a matter of a few weeks, and we anticipate a seamless process as we extend it to the entirety of our VDI environment. It is an essential piece of our VDI environment.”



The prior environment required a team of 12 system administrators to manage. The combination of Citrix XenApp and FSLogix shrank down to two senior architects”

Hector Cortez, Citrix Architect and Engineer
Neovia Logistics



ABOUT NEOVIA

Neovia is a global, industrial contract logistics company. We continuously reduce the cost of our customers' supply chains through nimble, state-of-the-art solutions, designed and implemented by professionals with unparalleled expertise in supply chain optimisation. From comprehensive inventory management and dynamic warehousing to outstanding job-site and inbound-to-manufacturing services, we approach logistics from our customers' point of view.

ABOUT FSLOGIX

FSLogix is a leading innovator of solutions that enable the enterprise virtual workspace, reducing the amount of hardware, time and labor required to support cloud and virtual desktops. FSLogix Apps seamlessly integrates with desktop virtualisation solutions from Microsoft, Citrix, VMware, and other industry leaders. The company is headquartered in Atlanta, GA, with offices in Orem, UT and Chelmsford, Essex, UK.

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.