ProfileUnity is the Remedy for Hospital's Virtual Desktops User-Profile Bugs

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-Raymond Smith, Desktop Analyst Memorial Healthcare

Organization:

Memorial Healthcare
Owosso, Michigan

Virtual Desktop Users:

1000+

Products

ProfileUnity™

Overview

Most employees at Memorial Healthcare, a 150-bed hospital in Owosso, Michigan, work from virtual desktops. The VMware View Horizon 6 environment comprises five desktop pools that are organized for doctors, nurses, executives and others. The hospital IT staff has approximately 1,100 user profiles to maintain. When users began experiencing performance problems with their virtual desktops, the IT staff learned that its persona management solution, VMware Persona Manager, had limitations that prevented the IT staff from resolving the issues.

The Challenge

After being in service for about three years, the virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) at Memorial Healthcare began exhibiting a chronic condition. Users began losing icons and settings from their desktops. The problem would occur for individuals, but not on all the virtual desktops in the pool. This was especially puzzling to the VDI support team, because the virtual desktops were not highly customized for each user. Desktop Analyst Raymond Smith suspected something in the user profiles was causing the problem. But when he investigated to determine what the issues could be (using VMware View Persona Management, Memorial Healthcare's profile- management module), he couldn't uncover the source of the problem or get the answers he needed.

The Solution

One of Memorial Healthcare's solution providers, Data Strategies of Grand Rapids, Michigan, suggested that Smith try ProfileUnity, the user-environment-management solution from Liquidware. Going far beyond basic persona management tools like VMware Persona Manager, ProfileUnity is a sophisticated user-environment management solution that not only offers robust profile management and folder redirection, but also it provides advanced features such as application-rights management.

"I watched a video and really liked the versatility of the product, so we got it," said Smith. "Being a hospital, our systems need to be up 24/7, so it's hard for us to do testing. I was working with ProfileUnity a little on the side. Then we started having some real problems with our virtual desktops, so we jumped fully into using ProfileUnity."

About three quarters of the hospital's users have Microsoft Outlook on their virtual desktops, and many were experiencing problems with the application. Smith learned Outlook had been configured incorrectly, and he used ProfileUnity to solve the problem.

"One of the things I really like about ProfileUnity is that it makes it very easy to see what you are configuring," said Smith. "It makes doing configuration much easier. The GUI is good and the Web interface is just what we needed."

ProfileUnity, and a little help from Liquidware's tech support, provided Smith with the visibility to identify the Outlook configuration issue – and the ability to quickly correct it on all the virtual desktops. "You can set ProfileUnity to auto-populate Outlook from your profile data. This property has been a very useful feature." ProfileUnity has other features to modify and control Outlook message handling, message formatting and AutoArchive execution, which Smith also leveraged.

"I got great help from the Liquidware support team," said Smith. "Their techs are very informative and showed me a few great tricks. Plus, they're very responsive."

With the immediate performance problems solved, Smith began exploring how ProfileUnity could help with another longstanding issue: slow login times. Doctors, nurses and other staff frequently access different workstations around the hospital, so fast login and reconnect times are important. Logging in commonly took a minute and a half, usually exceeding the 50-second goal. On average, ProfileUnity can reduce login times by 90 percent. In testing Smith has cut login times to between 40 and 48 seconds. "ProfileUnity has definitely shortened login times, and I'll get them even lower after I change some additional settings," he said.

The Results

ProfileUnity has given Memorial Healthcare a convenient way to change and optimize its users' profiles, producing faster login times, more consistent desktop performance and higher reliability. The hundreds of doctors, nurses and other staff members who rely on virtual desktops every day are benefiting from these improvements. Meanwhile, the team supporting the virtual desktop infrastructure benefits by managing the user experience with a solution that is more powerful and easier to use.

"ProfileUnity just makes it so much easier to see what you're doing, make changes and put them into production. For example, folder redirection is a big improvement over what is native in VMware Persona Manager," said Smith.

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