

Stratusphere UX Provides the City of Ede with Exceptional User Experience Management and Visibility

"Stratusphere UX offers us insights into our infrastructure that we did not have before, but it also ensures that we are not faced with surprises."

– Steven van de Graaf
IT Director, City of Ede

Organization:

City of Ede
The Netherlands

Virtual Desktop Users:

1,000 concurrent
virtual machines running
Windows 10 version 1809

Product:

Stratusphere UX™

Overview

The city of Ede is located in the center of the Netherlands, directly between the larger cities of Utrecht and Arnhem in the province of Gelderland. The population is slightly more than 100,000 people. The Saxons founded this beautiful, picturesque city in the eighth century. Matthijs Hilboezen, Workspace Infrastructure Engineer at the municipality of Ede, is responsible for 1,000 concurrent virtual desktops running Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops.

The city of Ede has been a satisfied Stratusphere UX™ customer since 2017. The solution is used to gain insight into the user experience and performance of city employees' workspaces. The problems identified are remediated quickly and transparently with Stratusphere UX to improve user experience. With the recent pandemic forcing a Work from Home policy, Stratusphere UX has delivered great value for the city's council offices.

Stratusphere UX Goes Above and Beyond

Working from home creates new challenges, not only for the end user, but also for the IT department. Hilboezen explains that simply having users who log in from diverse locations on a variety of devices can be very problematic because the IT department does not always have control over them. However, using Stratusphere UX has enabled a proactive approach to problem-solving.

For example, the city rapidly rolled out Microsoft Teams as their communication platform at the outbreak of COVID-19. However, Teams users in a VDI workspace can negatively impact the overall performance of the workspace, particularly when Teams is used without optimization.

Hilboezen explains, "I used Stratusphere UX for performance insights on users with an outdated Citrix Workspace App on their endpoint (e.g., laptops). What we have seen is an increase in resources such as CPU- and memory usage. The results have been used to configure the following criteria: if the endpoint is running Citrix Workspace App 1907 or higher, then the Teams application will be assigned to the user's workspace. If these criteria are not met, high-definition technology cannot be used, and performance issues will occur. Thin Clients within the organization are updated with the latest version of the Citrix Workspace App. Virtual Machines require an installation of the Virtual Desktop Agent (version 1906.2), which is already installed when creating our base image."

Without HDX, the performance of the workspace will suffer and, in turn, result in a negative user experience. "Our end users like it when a cause for a bad user experience is quickly found. With Stratusphere UX, I like to say 'measuring is knowing'. Stratusphere UX provides me the insights into the behavior of applications, updates and user login times so I can ensure an optimum user experience."

Prevention Is Better Than a Cure

Stratusphere UX helps to better understand the performance of VDI workspaces without optimization. Devices can be provided with the latest Citrix Workspace app so that HDX can be used, as Stratusphere UX clearly shows a performance difference and determines whether the Citrix Workspace does not meet the minimum requirement for a specific user.

To prevent performance issues, Hilboezen performs checks on the endpoint when launching the VDI workspace. If it shows the device is running an outdated version,

the user is advised to update their Citrix Workspace before using Teams. "This approach is definitely a 'prevention is better than a cure' scenario and Stratusphere UX enables me to efficiently monitor the endpoint devices and user experience."

Introducing Microsoft Power BI

Microsoft Power BI is increasingly used across organizations as a powerful solution for visualizing data. Before implementing Power BI, Hilboezen needed to understand the impact it would have on their virtual workspaces. Power BI requires a lot of resources while running queries and utilizing Stratusphere UX has provided insights into its effects on a set of colleagues' workspaces prior to a user-base roll out. Stratusphere UX identified that Power BI showed high memory and CPU peaks in the virtual workspace, pointing to the need to expand memory capacity to ensure a satisfying user experience. Without additional memory resources, Power BI would crash while running data queries making it unsuitable for running in a virtual machine.

"Without the insights gained from Stratusphere UX, we probably would have deployed Power BI on physical machines, which would have significantly increased the cost of deployment of this business application," said Hilboezen. "However, with the knowledge gained from Stratusphere UX, all we had to invest in was some more memory for the virtual machines, so Stratusphere UX reduced the overall cost of introducing Power BI."

The Results

With the move to working from home and introducing Power BI and Microsoft Teams for business productivity, Stratusphere UX has provided the city of Ede with immense user experience management and visibility. However, the one key feature that gives Hilboezen the most satisfaction is the user login breakdown function!

Having the opportunity to enjoy at least two cups of coffee while your machine boots up is one of the biggest causes of dissatisfied users. Many times, the cause is the automatic launch of background applications that are not even used. With the help of the Stratusphere UX Login Breakdown, Hilboezen has analyzed the number of started processes and commands during a user's login. One thing stood out in these overviews: a particular application was called repeatedly. This application's start-up time ranged from 40 seconds in most cases to sometimes a few minutes and, significantly, was in each user's auto-start. Consequently, colleagues who did not use this application unnecessarily experienced longer login times. "After disabling this auto-start application, user experience has improved, and colleagues who need this application can start it manually from the start menu."

At the municipality of Ede, Stratusphere UX is used both proactively when application updates or Windows version changes are made and reactively – when problems like

long login times or crashed systems arise. Steven van de Graaf, IT Manager at the city of Ede said, "Stratusphere UX offers us insights into our infrastructure that we did not have before, but it also ensures that we are not faced with surprises. As a result, we have been able to be proactive about our workspace management. Certainly, in these times where working from home has become very important to us, we want to facilitate a smooth WFH experience for our employees and at the same time remain in control of IT and ensure optimal user experience! Liquidware has been an integral part of this."



HQ 3600 Mansell Road Suite 200 | Alpharetta, GA 30022

866.914.9667 | [Liquidware.com](https://www.liquidware.com) | info@liquidware.com

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