Liquidware Labs™

Customer Profile

ICG Deploys Stratusphere UX to Enable Unparalleled VDI User Experience

> *"Stratusphere UX is a key technology in our our 'armory' to provide best-of-breed VDI to the business."*
>
> *- Lee Lambard, IT Director, Service Delivery, ICG*

Organization:
Intermediate Capital Group, plc. (ICG)

Virtual Desktop Users:
260+ at any one time

Product:
Stratusphere™ UX

Overview

Founded in 1989, Intermediate Capital Group (ICG) is a specialist asset manager investing in private debt, credit and equity. Today ICG has a record assets under management of more than €20 billion, and currently operates multiple strategies with investors from all over the world, across the spectrum of institutional investors, pension funds, insurance companies, banks, asset managers, fund of funds, and sovereign wealth funds.

ICG was a relatively early adopter of VDI, serving global customers from two data centres.

The Challenge

As explained by Lee Lambard, IT Director, Service Delivery, "Over time, the investment and infrastructure decisions made had a bearing on our users' VDI experience. Our challenge was that we had a groundswell of dissatisfaction due to perceived poor performance and no technical solution to remediate it." Having ascertained from copious help desk calls that the VDI experience was a backward step for their users, Mr. Lambard needed a technology solution to remove the emotive aspects of quality and performance of virtual desktops. "We needed to baseline the user experience and socialize that to demonstrate positive steps in improvements," commented Mr. Lambard. "We also needed to agree to a minimum level of service with the business and to factually demonstrate any deviation to enable us to remove the anecdotal and emotive responses."

It is a well known fact that when dealing with humans, the "Layer 8" issue comes to the fore, and for this, diagnostic-drill-down evidence is needed to enable proactivity in dealing with user complaints.

The Solution

Stratusphere UX is one of the components enabling Mr. Lambard to drive proactive IT operations. "The desktop experience is how customers identify with IT services, and there are lots of disparate parts that make up the overall experience. Having a solution like Stratusphere UX that provides us trended and historical data means we can, in many cases, avoid an issue before the user is even aware." By constantly gathering data, Stratusphere UX enables ICG to troubleshoot issues that users have experienced but it can't replicate at the time of placing a support call.

"We can drill down in the Stratusphere UX time lines to look deeper into the information, expose more details and pinpoint the issue, whether it be a performance problem, application issue or user-initiated situation. From a help-desk point of view, it is very useful to be able to identify the root cause via Stratusphere UX and thus remediate the situation promptly."

From the IT infrastructure-design perspective, ICG has also undergone two upgrade changes of their stack – host and network change. Stratusphere UX has been utilized to demonstrate after each change the effect on the user base.

"We used to say, finger in the air, it is better. With Stratusphere UX we are able to leverage the user experience score as a means to ensure the infrastructure is appropriately supporting the necessary user. Having a user-centric metric to define and validate

hardware changes keeps us accountable to user performance," acknowledged Mr. Lambard. "We are currently using VMware Horizon View 5.3 and plan to upgrade to version 6 in the future. At which time, we will again use Stratusphere UX to ensure the upgrade provides our users with the level of optimization we expect from the upgrade."

The Results

While it is hard to quantify actual monetary savings, Stratusphere UX has enabled Mr. Lambard's service desk team to move to a proactive approach.

"The service desk is continually looking at Stratusphere UX to identify and route issues to the right engineering team *before* the end user calls them. This avoidance strategy decreases the volume of support calls and also provides us quality of data to make better, informed decisions." Currently, the team are proactively monitoring between 260 and 270 logged in desktops at any one time.

"Stratusphere UX provides us the insight and key measurements to ensure IT Services delivers the best experience to our users It informs us to re-order certain project time lines based upon best UX scores to obtain minimal delays and finally it enables us to remediate many issues before our users are even aware of a degradation in service. Stratusphere UX is a key technology in our 'armory' to provide best-of-breed VDI to the business," concluded Mr. Lambard.

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