

ProfileUnity Helps Contractor Build & Maintain a Workplace Advantage

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— Dan Milano, Director of IT,
M. Davis & Sons

Organization:
M. Davis & Sons, Inc.

Virtual desktop infrastructure environment:

Approximately 300 virtualized PCs, laptops and tablets running Windows 7 or 10 in the VMware environment

Product:
ProfileUnity™

Overview

An IT director with nearly a decade's experience with virtual desktop infrastructure shares his observations and tips for using ProfileUnity to provide a consistently excellent user experience, even in trying conditions.

The Challenge

"Our company has always tried to take advantage of technology to improve competitiveness any way we could," says Dan Milano, director of IT at M. Davis & Sons, a fifth-generation, Delaware-based industrial construction company that builds, installs and maintains corporate plants and facilities for national and international companies. The technology and tools that have been used to provide a competitive advantage have changed a lot during the company's 145-year history, but one thing has not: its willingness to pursue innovation to gain an edge. That is why it became an early adopter of virtualized desktops back around 2009.

"Our employees work at multiple sites and at all kinds of customer facilities. We wanted a good mobile platform that would let them work on any device, from anywhere. We started the hardest way possible, by using linked clones," says Milano, who notes the company continues to use linked clones to this day.

"Sometimes we had to get really creative to get the bandwidth we needed. Plus, storage was at a premium back then, so we wanted to keep our desktops as tidy as possible. Profile management is a big part of that."

The Solution

Milano quickly got control of the virtual desktops and was able to provide consistency across PCs, laptops and tablets that were used on premise and at customer sites. He did it by going beyond the basic tools VMware provided and using ProfileUnity for user profile and environment management. ProfileUnity helped work around the problems associated with low bandwidth and inconsistent performance across endpoint device types that also had a variety of different applications and user needs.

For example, M. Davis & Sons makes extensive use of ProfileUnity's FlexDisk™ technology. FlexDisk provisions flexible user VMware VMDKs (Virtual Machine Disks) on a VMFS (Virtual Machine File System) to eliminate the streaming of applications and data over the network. A single FlexDisk with an application or data can be shared among many users, which allows an organization to reduce application and data storage space requirements by as much as 100:1. Independently of FlexDisk, ProfileUnity automatically compresses user profiles before delivering them to the desktop. It typically achieves a compression ratio of 50:1 or better, which further reduces bandwidth requirements and speeds login times. ProfileUnity's Profile Clean-up feature can be set to flush profiles at predetermined times or action intervals, which prevents profile bloat from occurring over time.

When ProfileUnity's ProfileDisk feature was introduced it made an immediate positive impact on operations at M. Davis & Sons. ProfileDisk seamlessly offloads the entire user profile to a virtual disk. Large profile data is accessed quickly via block level VHD or VMDK volume. That is extremely helpful when employees are working from low-bandwidth locations. ProfileDisk efficiently executes large profiles, including those with Office 365 Outlook caching and Windows indexing, which eliminates frequent causes of slow logins.

"Hard work always pays off for managing the virtual desktop environment," says Milano. "My advice to any other ProfileUnity user is to read the fine print, understand the details about the features, and speak up to ask about how they can help. If you do that, you'll reap the rewards like I did."

Over the years Milano has used ProfileUnity to migrate physical desktop users to virtual desktops, migrate Windows XP machines to Windows 7, and then again to Windows 10. He makes extensive use of ProfileUnity's filtering capabilities to optimize images and profiles, and to take advantage of the folder redirection capabilities to give users faster access to their files.

Milano is also planning to start using ProfileUnity to manage the user environment for the company's non-virtualized computers. "The effort needed for managing our physical and virtual desktops is like night and day," says Milano. "Our virtual environment practically runs itself."

The Results

Virtual desktops continue to evolve for M. Davis & Sons. As technology develops, the company has been virtualizing more and more of its applications. That process has been helped by ProfileUnity's FlexApp Layers, which delivers containerized applications to virtual desktops without modifying the base image. FlexApp can virtualize complex applications that were impossible or difficult to virtualize using other methods.

"Support calls for virtual desktops are easy. There's no running around chasing tails, we know where to go to fix the problem," says Milano. "ProfileUnity saves us a lot of time, effort, money and frustration."



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