

# Neither too much nor too little, ProfileUnity™ is just right for the Royal College of Physicians

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*- Ruwan de Silva  
IT Project Manager, RCP*

## Organization:

Royal College of Physicians

## Virtual Desktop Users:

75 concurrent users in office;  
15 concurrent remote users

## Products:

ProfileUnity™

## Overview

The Royal College of Physicians (RCP) based In London, UK, is a not-for-profit institution that has been supporting and representing physicians for nearly 500 years. The RCP's mission is to support physician fellows and members during every stage of their careers, and thereby enhance the quality of patient care. The main focus of the RCP's mission is to improve the standards of healthcare worldwide by offering education and certification programs to provide physicians with the knowledge and skills they need to stay current in medicine best practice. To that end, the RCP employs a staff base which includes highly experienced and credentialed researchers who produce a wealth of information resources for physicians, trainees, medical students and healthcare professionals. These resources include a wide range of clinical evidence-based guidelines, audit reports, publications, toolkits and more. In addition, the RCP oversees accreditation programs and certification for physicians who wish to practice medicine in the UK.

Due to the increasing staffing levels and limited available space within one of its Departments, the RCP recognized that action needed to be taken. In addition, there was a risk inherent in storing valuable research data for clinical reports and studies, upon individual PCs that were not backed up. In order to address these concerns, the RCP explored the de facto solution to address such issues, which 'enforced' the storage of data centrally upon file servers. The solution was to implement a system involving "roaming profiles." Folder redirection was also incorporated, but the issue of "bulky" user profiles remained in the absence of any policy restrictions on what users could store. Overall, these approaches left much to be desired.

## The Challenge

“The main area of concern for us was the time it took for users to log on,” said Ruwan de Silva, IT Project Manager for the RCP. “It was evident that there were several ‘bottlenecks’ present on the network and users’ profiles took a significant amount of time to load. Often they had to perform the login multiple times before they were successful. The log on process was also heavily affected by our over-inflated Group Policy, which contained far too many objects.”

Recognizing that this approach was less than adequate, de Silva began looking for other means of increasing the mobility of RCP staff and securing their data, while at the same time ensuring that user productivity was unaffected. Familiar with VMware® in their environment, de Silva began exploring the potential of VMware View and persistent desktops.

“Our original plan was to offer persistent desktops to all 75 of our permanent and remote staff, but upon further investigation, we realized that perhaps linked clones and VMware ThinApp could provide us with a more cost-effective and workable solution,” said De Silva. “Mainly we were looking at ways to deal with the impact of persistent desktops upon our network with 75 concurrent users, and we wanted to avoid any network latency issues for our researchers, given the time-critical nature of their work.” Missing submission dates can potentially lead to severe financial penalties.

## The Solution

Non-persistent desktops seemed to be the clear answer; however linked clones did not address the roaming profiles and folder redirection problems that had been plaguing the RCP. This set de Silva in search of a user virtualization solution to address this need.

“We looked first at RES, but any consideration of this solution was soon discarded once I understood that a SQL database would need to be bolted on the backend,” said de Silva. “It really

was just too much overhead in the face of our actual needs. We needed a simple, straightforward solution that made managing our user profiles and saving data to a network drive far easier and much more reliable. We were certainly not looking to add to our burden of support concerns for key systems unnecessarily.”

Upon researching the problem de Silva saw mention of Liquidware ProfileUnity on VMware’s website. Discussions with a VMware representative subsequently took place, and he recommended a test of the product. De Silva took the advice, downloaded the product for trial and recognized almost immediately that he had found what he had been searching for.

“It was as if someone had read my mind and designed a solution which precisely addressed our need. Nothing more and nothing less,” said de Silva. The concept was simple yet effective and clearly addressed the need. Liquidware’s excellent, dedicated support team provided “gold star” assistance during the trial phase and guided the RCP through the process of implementation. But overall the process of incorporating ProfileUnity within their environment ran smoothly.

“What has made ProfileUnity so effective for our needs is the level of granularity it provides. We can use the built-in configuration for general profile portability or pinpoint very specific parts of the registry in the user profile. As a result, the issues we had with our logon process are a thing of the past,” said de Silva.

## The Benefits

De Silva further elaborated that, such was the effectiveness of the solution, a rethink was prompted of their original desktop strategy. The key change was the decision NOT to provision virtual desktops for each user when they were office based, but rather to implement a ‘hot desking’ solution using Profile Unity’s capabilities.

Hot desking is a working practice that enables the individual to make use of any available workstation within the office and use it as their own. Hot desking had been one of the key original requirements in the project which arose out of the cost-containment need to share desktops in shifts, rather than renting out more office space and provisioning more hardware. Hot desking would have less of an impact on performance than offering virtual desktops in the office.

Ensuring that users' were experiencing a more 'familiar' personalized hot desk and instant access to their files had been a challenge with Roaming Profiles and Group Policies. However, ProfileUnity was able to handle this with ease. Today, desktops within the office are installed with the base applications, and users can come in and login to any available desktop to retrieve their profiles and data as if they were local. ThinApp is used on an ad hoc basis, where additional programs are required.

Outside of the office, remote users are able to access non-persistent linked clone VMs that deliver applications via VMware ThinApp and user virtualization via ProfileUnity. Today, both Microsoft applications, including Microsoft Office and other specialized research tools running on Windows® XP form part of a standard image.

Profile Unity also formed a key element of the RCPs recent migration to Windows 7. Having tested the compatibility of each application, PC images were created. Users simply had to log on to their new PCs to acquire their user profiles. This significantly increased the speed in which the process was completed, when compared to previous deployments.

"As a non-profit organization with such a high profile, we need to offer very high levels of service with our IT systems" said de Silva. "ProfileUnity answered our needs on many levels. It was significantly more affordable and easier to use than its competitors. It supports both our physical and virtual environments, enabling us to adopt the best approach in every scenario. It also gives us the granularity and control we need to be effective today and will greatly ease our workload when implementing changes in future. Needless to say, we are very happy with our decision to implement the solution."



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