



Cambridge City Council

Cambridge City Council wanted to enable flexible home-office working for its staff, giving them secure, easy access to central systems. The Council worked with its IT services partner Serco to virtualize its remote working environment using Novell® ZENworks® Application Virtualization. With two-factor authentication and zero footprint on the home-office PCs, the solution is both highly secure and easy to maintain.

Overview

Cambridge City Council provides statutory local authority services to residents and businesses in Cambridge, UK. Assessed as an 'excellent' local authority, the Council is responsible for a wide range of services including benefits, building controls, council housing, local taxation, parking and waste recycling. The city is also home to Cambridge University, one of the UK's premier academic institutions.

Challenge

The Council employs a large number of people on flexible working arrangements. This is valuable for both employees and the Council, as it allows talented people to continue their careers even when changes in their domestic circumstances make it difficult to work the traditional 'nine to five'.

For employees who work in short blocks of hours each day, travelling to and from work would occupy an unreasonably large proportion of their working day. Being able to log in to City systems easily and securely from home increases their work availability, and reduces their carbon footprint through reduced journeys.

For the City's IT department, installing and maintaining suitable software on the home workers' PCs represented a considerable administrative burden. For example, a routine operating system update on the home machine might conflict with the settings required for the council's software, requiring the IT support team to spend time and effort on a remote fix.

Solution

Serco, the IT services provider for Cambridge City Council, understood the value of providing secure, maintenance-free access for remote working, and proposed an innovative solution based on Novell ZENworks Application Virtualization. Using the Novell software, Serco encapsulated a secure remote working environment in a Web browser and stored it on USB memory sticks. These sticks are now issued to all those Council employees who are authorised to connect remotely.

To work from home, a Council employee can simply insert the USB sticks into their home PC. This launches a Web browser pre-populated with the correct connection settings and secure log-in home page.

Cambridge City Council at a glance:

Local government for university city

■ Industry:

Government

■ Location:

UK

■ Products and Services:

Novell ZENworks Application Virtualization

■ Results:

- Enabled secure remote working through Web browser for up to 250 Council staff
- Eliminated most support calls related to home PC technical issues
- Reduced staff travel, contributing to environmental targets

“With the Novell solution, we have eliminated the technical support previously required for users' home PCs, and increased the security of access.”

James Nightingale

*Head of ICT Client Services
Cambridge City Council*



“The Council is keen to increase end-point security and flexible working opportunities; Novell ZENworks Application Virtualization provides an excellent foundation.”

James Nightingale
Head of ICT Client Services
Cambridge City Council

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Employees enter a valid user name and password and wait to receive a unique, temporary code via SMS on their mobile phone. Entering this code completes the two-factor authentication process, enabling the employee to access applications and services exactly as if they were working in the office.

“Novell ZENworks Application Virtualization Technology has given the Council an easy, secure and reliable way to enable flexible working for employees,” said James Nightingale, Head of ICT Client Services, Cambridge City Council. “With the Novell solution, we have eliminated the technical support previously required for users’ home PCs, and increased the security of access. For example, the complete prevention of printing and local copying of files helps the Council comply with its confidentiality and Data Protection requirements, and yet grants full access for authorised users to the information they need.”

The virtualized browser does not depend on or make changes to local settings or configuration, and cannot itself be changed by users. Connection to the Council’s systems is simple, secure and reliable, and requires no intervention or maintenance by the IT department.

To further ensure security, the virtualized environment prevents local copying or printing of Council files or folders, and when the remote working session is concluded the entire environment is deleted. Even temporary connection and cache files are stored within the virtualized environment, and it is not possible to copy or move these files to the local PC.

Results

Cambridge City Council has now enabled 130 remote workers using the Novell ZENworks Application Virtualization approach, with a first-stage target of 250 users. The result has been an immediate reduction in support and technical calls to the IT helpdesk. Users report that the solution eliminates problems previously caused by technical conflicts between their local machines and the Council’s application settings.

The Novell solution also preserves confidentiality of data for both the Council and for users, and the secure user login and authentication process helps to prevent unauthorised access.

“The Council is benefiting from improved working and better work/life balance for staff, as well as improving its green agenda commitment with staff working from home,” said Davinder Singh Hunjan, Senior ICT Client Officer, Cambridge City Council.

Following the success of the remote working solution, Serco and the Council are evaluating Novell ZENworks Application Virtualization as a tool for distributing new applications internally. This approach will enable applications to run in isolation, avoiding any potential configuration conflicts. Once an application has been tested in the Novell ZENworks Application Virtualization environment, it will be ready to deploy to all users.

“The Novell solution offers the possibility of rapid and worry-free application deployment for both internal and external users,” said Nightingale.



For More Information:

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