



Profile

Trading cooperative for building and construction materials, wall and floor coverings

Company

HG COMMERCIALE

Location

CH-8022 Zürich (Switzerland)

Business

Trading

Website

www.hgc.ch

Solution

- LANDesk® Management Suite

Benefits

- Cost and time savings
- Centralized nationwide client management
- Very low customization effort required
- Quick to implement
- Integrated patch management
- Staging for the migration of smaller sites



HGC builds on LANDesk®

HG COMMERCIALE is a trading cooperative in the building and construction industry based in Switzerland. With 40 offices in all regions of Switzerland they ensure that their professional clientèle—companies from all sectors of the building and construction industry—have the right materials in the right place and at the right time. In addition, the cooperative runs 17 showrooms for wall and floor coverings. Today, approximately 800 employees work for HGC. LANDesk® Management Suite ensured a smooth migration of HGC's client PC environment to Windows 7.

“At our headquarters in Zurich, a group of only three people manages around 100 Windows servers and 650 Windows clients which are distributed between 46 locations, each with one to 50 PCs,” Daniel Vogt, Manager of IT and Telecommunications at HGC describes the challenge of his everyday IT operations. “Some our smaller sites in particular are located in very remote areas of Switzerland, since we have to make sure that our local customers can always reach us easily.”

Challenge

After using Windows XP for nine years, the IT team at HGC had to migrate their widely dispersed client landscape to the current Microsoft operation system Windows 7. “The Migration was scheduled to happen from January to March 2011, since business in construction and building materials is, by nature, slower during the winter months,” explains Vogt. The producer of the script-based tool which HGC used for client management, however, had discontinued further development of the software. Therefore, they needed a replacement for the Windows 7 rollout which would not only provide support for operation system and software distribution, but for patch management and remote control as well. “Some of our employees work with two PCs, others share one PC, there all kinds of variations,” says Vogt. “It was therefore important for us that the client-management solution would allow the distribution of Windows 7 based on using active directory as our leading directory service.”

The quintessential Swiss multilingualism added yet another requirement. Windows 7 migration at HGC meant that—depending on the individual location—German, French or Italian versions of Windows had to be migrated. In addition, the client-management solution was expected to be able to handle granularly controlled operating system and software distribution equally well as locations with narrowband connections: The WAN line bandwidth at HGC ranges from the 10 Mbits per second links used by the larger sites to VDSL speed used by the smallest branch offices.

Solution

In October 2010, prior to the planned Windows 7 rollout, Daniel Vogt's team evaluated several client management solutions. “Only well-known suppliers were considered,” explains Daniel Vogt. Three solutions were shortlisted: Microsoft System Center, Columbus by the Swiss local favorite Brainware, as well as LANDesk Management Suite. “In the end, we decided in favor of LANDesk, because LANDesk Management Suite requires a lot less infrastructure and training than Microsoft's solution—LANDesk offers all we need right out of the box,” says Vogt.

After the decision was made in favor of LANDesk, HGC introduced LANDesk Management Suite in November. “A LANDesk engineer installed the solution and explained it to us, and it was all done within one week,” Vogt remembers. “There was virtually no post-processing or rework necessary, and we were able to get started right away. I was really surprised how quickly and smoothly my staff was ready to work.” Vogt was thus able to start the Windows 7 migration as planned. From January to March 2011 his team replaced 200 legacy PCs with new devices which

were equipped with the latest software in Zurich and then delivered to the branch offices. HGC migrated the remaining 540 computers to Windows 7 in due time within only a few weeks and with only three employees from systems management plus one help desk employee.

Results

“The PCs were set up by the headquarters in Zurich within a very short time,” Vogt remembers. “The big advantage with LANDesk was the fully unattended setup: In the past, you had to press ‘Return’ again and again, but with LANDesk you set up the sequence once and after that it runs through without any further interaction. This saves us a lot of time and increases our efficiency.”

Vogt’s team was able to transfer the existing MSI packages as well as their own packages to the Windows 7 platform. Nevertheless, LANDesk Management Suite also demonstrated its great potential in distributing. “We were finally able to create packages for each and every type of software and to distribute them from one central location,” Vogt says with relief. “Before, we were only able to use MSI packages. Today, we can distribute executables, batch and VB-based information in an automated way so that all installations without exceptions are done using LANDesk.

During rollout his team migrated all of the 450 PCs of their inventory overnight. “The only situation where we ran into problems was if an employee at one of our branch offices had turned off the computer despite our instructions not to do so, which then required us to restart the computer via Wakeup-on-LAN,” says Vogt. “From LANDesk’s side however, everything went smoothly—there is no other way to put it.”

But there were also few bumps in the road of this OS migration. “We also used the migration process to streamline our software inventory,” Vogt recounts. “Some of the remaining software providers had promised to have their solutions ready to run on 64-bit systems by the time of our Windows 7 migration which was then not the case in all instances. This took us additional time, but the rollout itself with LANDesk was a cinch.”

To ensure high availability, HGC at first migrated all of their branch offices only partially. On day one, devices with even inventory numbers received the new software image, PCs with odd numbers only followed on the next day. “This security measure proved to be unnecessary, as there was not a single problem,” says Vogt. The staging functionality of the LANDesk solution however was a big advantage. “Some of our branch offices are really ‘out in the middle of nowhere’ and can only be reached via narrowband connection,” Vogt explains. “Hence, it was very useful for us that LANDesk offers the capability to resume a terminated session right at the point of interruption. We were thus able to get up-to-date software installed even at our very remote locations without having to ship DVDs.”

Unlike before, patch management is now integrated. “We no longer need a separate tool for that, hence handling has become much more efficient, and the option to roll out patches in stages is very convenient from a security point of view,” says Vogt. Furthermore, HGC benefits greatly from the remote control functionality of LANDesk Management Suite. “This function does not require admin rights. Therefore, we were able to also give users from other departments than the IT department access to remote control,” the IT manager explains. “Our Key User Logistics department uses it nowadays. This enables key users to support the personnel in the branch offices, if someone needs help with the business software.”

The technical features and refinements of the client management solution result in clear economic benefits for HGC. “A higher degree of automation simply means increased efficiency,” Daniel Vogt summarizes. “I can get significantly more work done with the same number of employees—PC setup today is four times faster than in the past.”

His conclusion: “LANDesk provided us with optimum support during our nationwide Windows 7 rollout.” Vogt will therefore stick with the solution. “In the future, we want to make better use of LANDesk’s comprehensive reporting functionality,” he says and impishly adds: “Maybe we will also take a closer look at LANDesk Service Desk.”

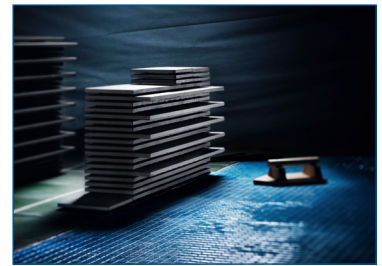
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LSI-0999-EN 0911 SD/AZUJ



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