Ensuring a Successful PC Refresh

How CDS Improved Performance and Productivity by Upgrading to New Systems with Windows 7

This case study is brought to you by PC Connection, Inc., parent of the PC Connection family of companies, a collection of best-in-class information technology (IT) solutions providers. Its subsidiaries include PC Connection Sales Corporation, GovConnection, and MoreDirect, which service small- and medium-sized businesses, government, and enterprise markets, respectively.

»» Custom Disability Solutions (CDS), located in South Portland, Maine, is a division of Reliance Standard Life Insurance Company. CDS offers re-insurance solutions and underwriting, claims, and marketing services to health and life insurance carriers. When CDS wanted to perform a complete desktop refresh, they turned to a trusted IT partner that could lead the way to elevated productivity and improved systems management.

Time for a Change

Systems Administrator, Evan Flaherty, and his IT team, led the project to implement a desktop refresh at CDS. For a while, CDS had primarily focused on their back-end infrastructure—making their PCs and clients a second priority. However, increasingly CDS had been running into numerous hardware, application, and browser incompatibilities with their current PCs and clients. This decreased system performance and hampered user productivity. As a result, the IT team had to spend a good deal of time maintaining the organization's 150 desktops, and this slowed down their workforce. It was clear that the systems at CDS were overdue for an upgrade.

With a goal to immediately improve performance, productivity, and end-user satisfaction, Evan and the CDS IT team took action. They reached out to PC Connection to begin the process to evaluate, select, and configure new systems for CDS.

One Giant Leap

Looking to boost productivity and ease the systems' management burden, Evan contacted his PC Connection Account Manager to learn more about a complete PC refresh with Windows 7. "Our main driver was the fact that we were on the Windows 2000 Professional operating system," notes Evan. "It's not a project for the faint of heart—jumping from Windows 2000 to the Windows 7 platform—but we knew it was an absolute necessity to do so."

Evan was looking for speed enhancements from brand new top-of-the-line machines as well as a slimmed down, streamlined operating system. He was also looking forward to the enhanced security that Windows 7 offers.

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Laying the Groundwork

When CDS made the decision to move forward, they knew it was too late to migrate to Windows XP, and they did not want to move to Vista. They used the time before migrating to Windows 7 to work on getting all of their in-house applications to work well with the new OS. "90% of our applications—our claims, underwriting, and rating applications—were all built in-house," said Evan. "It's not as easy as out-of-the-box software that is already compatible. We had to make sure these things ran, and ran correctly, or rewrite or repackage some of them."

Putting the Plan into Action

Evan recalls, "We relied a lot on PC Connection to help us with our budgeting. We presented them with what we were willing to spend, and allowed them to do the groundwork and present a solution to us. My Account Manager took the time to look into his partnerships and find out when they had deals coming up, especially with the quantities that we were ordering. They did the legwork so that when we found the best deal we were ready to move forward with it."

The assistance didn't stop with the sale. PC Connection also handled imaging and configuration for CDS. "That was the best part of this whole project," said Evan. "I didn't realize that PC Connection offered imaging as a service. When I heard about that, it completely changed my timeline. We didn't have to spend time un-boxing the machines, finding a place to store them, hooking them up, and then imaging them. It really gave us the time to focus on simply rolling them out." As a result Evan spent a lot more time with the users. "It's a daunting thing having a new machine, and we were there to address any issues immediately. I was also really surprised at the cost of imaging the machines—it was an absolute no brainer. Just getting the license to image each machine can be 2–3 times what PC Connection offered. Having that service done for us made our project hugely successful."

A Staged Approach

Rather than roll out 150 desktops at once, CDS opted for a staged approach. Evan noted, "When we got our final image ready, we sent it to PC Connection and they returned 5 test machines to us. After some tweaks, we did the rollout in stages of 50 machines. It was nice space-wise, and easier to handle in smaller increments. The physical rollout took about 2 months. But, a lot of that time was not physical setup, it was spent more on us coordinating with our users the best time to get them a new machine."

A Major Win

For Evan, the big wins were having the imaging done by PC Connection, productivity gains from the combined speed of the new OS and new machines, and a lightened load for his IT department. "We don't spend as much time running around, swapping failing hard drives, and fixing compatibility issues now. In the beginning of the project, I spent many nights wondering why something has not gone wrong yet—and it never did. I was waiting for that one big showstopper moment, but we didn't have any of that." He recommends, "Do a lot of planning upfront, fine tune your image, and make sure everything works beforehand. Let PC Connection do the rest."

☎ **Call your Account Manager today to learn more about a PC refresh with Windows 7.**

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—Evan Flaherty, Systems Administrator
Custom Disability Solutions

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