



Government of Hamilton County

Hamilton County Increases Efficiency, Resiliency, and Agility with VMware Horizon View and Unidesk

The government of Hamilton County's 20-person IT team is responsible for supporting 1,000 employees. Desktop management was straining IT resources because of the wide variety of applications and desktop configurations required to deliver vital county services. The government of Hamilton County implemented VMware® Horizon View™ desktop virtualization and desktop layering software from Unidesk® on Dell server and storage infrastructure to improve the migration of existing PCs to Windows 7 and Office 2010, simplify desktop management, and reduce costs.

Located in central Indiana, Hamilton County is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States and the fourth largest county in Indiana. Named "America's Best Place to Raise a Family" in 2008 by Forbes.com, Hamilton County is just north of Indianapolis and close to many recreational venues.

The Challenge

For several years, Hamilton County had been using VMware vSphere® server virtualization to meet its IT needs and reduce costs. When the county looked to virtualize its desktops, it turned to Horizon View and desktop layering software from VMware partner Unidesk.

Chris Mertens, Director of Information Technology for Hamilton County, and his colleagues believed the combined solution would simultaneously address many of the county's needs, including streamlining IT's upcoming desktop migration and simplifying ongoing IT desktop management. These benefits were appealing to county commissioners, department heads, and elected officials alike.

"We had to upgrade to Microsoft Windows 7 and Office 2010, but many of our PCs weren't powerful enough to run them," recalls Mertens. "Desktop virtualization would allow us to reuse these PCs and extend their life. Plus, our public offices—public safety, county clerk, treasurer, and courts—could introduce initiatives or application requirements at any time. Virtual desktops would give us a faster, easier way to respond to these requests while maintaining the high standards of security and service we are known for in our county."

The Solution

The county virtualized more than 400 desktops with Horizon View, Unidesk, and Dell storage and servers. Horizon View is a complete virtual desktop infrastructure solution that enables consistent, secure mobile access to essential applications and data so agencies can better reach, serve, and protect the public. The combination of Horizon View and Unidesk also greatly simplifies desktop management. In the event of an emergency, Horizon View supports continuity of operations and disaster recovery standards. It also complies with the highest government standards to secure desktops, applications, and data against cyber-security threats on citizen information, agency operations, and infrastructure.

"With the performance Horizon View and the PCoIP protocol delivered, our users couldn't even tell that the new virtual desktops were running in our private cloud," says Mertens.

INDUSTRY

Public sector/Local government

LOCATION

Hamilton County, Indiana

KEY CHALLENGES

- Reuse existing underpowered PCs to run current desktop software
- Replace PCs with more energy-efficient zero clients
- Enhance desktop access, security, manageability, and disaster recovery

SOLUTION

With VMware® Horizon View™ and Unidesk® on Dell server and storage infrastructure, Hamilton County has reduced IT desktop management time and costs while improving employee access to desktops, data, and applications.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Reduced provisioning times from 8+ hours to 10 minutes or less
- Freed IT staff to work on other projects that benefit the county
- Improved county service delivery because workers now access applications anywhere, anytime, on any device
- Reduced future desktop upgrade costs

VMWARE CASE STUDY

“VMware Horizon View gives our county workers the ability to do their jobs from the office, home, or the road. Unidesk makes our virtual desktops and applications unbelievably easy to provision, patch, and update. For us, Unidesk and VMware offer the ideal solution for easy desktop virtualization.”

Chris Mertens
Director of IT,
Hamilton County Government, Indiana

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

The county has virtualized 400 desktops with Horizon View, Unidesk, Dell storage and servers, and various zero and thin clients.

APPLICATIONS VIRTUALIZED

- Microsoft Office
- Intuit QuickBooks
- Kronos
- Tyler Technologies ERP
- Adobe Reader
- Firefox
- Adobe Creative Suite
- Dymo LabelWriter
- Track-It! Help Desk
- Odyssey case management system software

PLATFORM

- VMware® Horizon View™
- VMware vSphere®
- Unidesk®

Centrally managing data, applications, and devices with Horizon View helps county IT staff ensure that no data resides on a device should an employee misplace it or PC security be breached. The solution extends the life of existing hardware, supports the county's IT policy-driven bring your own device (BYOD) initiative, and enables a small team of IT professionals to more quickly and easily support the desktop management needs of all users—anytime, anywhere.

“Our employees love the convenience of being able to pull up county applications anywhere they have an Internet connection using their own personal devices,” adds Mertens.

To more efficiently provision and manage its diverse set of applications and desktop configurations, Hamilton County deployed Unidesk desktop layering technology because it virtualizes applications separately from the Windows OS. The rapid layering process requires that application installation procedures take place only once. Now printers, Microsoft Office, Intuit QuickBooks, Adobe Creative Suite, Dymo LabelWriter, Track-It! Help Desk, Odyssey case management system software, and 60 other layered applications can be deployed to or removed from users' desktops in a few clicks.

According to Zach SeRine, network administrator at Hamilton County, “In one afternoon, I had the environment built, applications virtualized, and desktops provisioned into our pools using Unidesk's integration connector for Horizon View.” Because IT layered all of its applications separately, the county uses a single clean Windows 7 OS layer as the foundation for all of its virtual desktops and has only one gold image to patch and manage.

Business Benefits

In combination, Horizon View, Unidesk, Dell storage and servers, and zero clients are enabling Hamilton County to achieve all of its desktop virtualization goals—from improved IT staff efficiency and enhanced workforce mobility to greater security and resiliency from desktop failure and disaster. The solution has increased IT agility by reducing provisioning times from hours to minutes, and improved anytime, anywhere employee access to data, applications, and desktops for all county employees.

Users enjoy the consistency of persistent desktops that save every change and configuration they make, including printer settings. They also appreciate being able to work more productively. Whether it is a judge issuing a warrant from a boat in the Cayman Islands or a county clerk managing cases from home, virtual desktops enable Hamilton County to better protect and serve its citizens.

From an operational perspective, Horizon View and Unidesk enable day-to-day management of virtual desktops to be handled by the same Level 1 IT staff that managed PCs. SeRine and his Level 2 and 3 IT peers are now free to focus on other IT projects that benefit the county.

“My goal is to make it as easy and as efficient as possible for my staff to deliver great service to our end users,” concludes Mertens “For virtual desktops, Horizon View and Unidesk take the load off my junior and senior administrators. It's just that easy.”

Moreover, because Hybrid SAN arrays from VMware strategic partner Dell take full advantage of Unidesk's storage efficiency to maximize IO performance, the county is able to host 3-4 times more desktops on each Dell EqualLogic hybrid array, greatly reducing TCO.

Looking Ahead

Hamilton County expects to continue to expand its use of virtual desktops to nearly 600 desktops while reducing, support and energy costs as it increases IT agility and flexibility through its desktop and server virtualization initiatives.

