



## SOUTHERN STATES COOPERATIVE DEPLOYS HUNDREDS OF VIRTUAL DESKTOPS WITH VMWARE IN LESS THAN A MONTH



### INDUSTRY RETAIL

### LOCATION RICHMOND, VA, USA

### KEY CHALLENGES

- No centralized visibility into retail or sales orders in real time
- Non-standardized applications and delivery methods for each business unit
- Lengthy training process for new hires on old point-of-sale systems

### SOLUTION

Southern States Cooperative uses VMware Horizon and VMware Mirage to deliver virtualized desktops and applications to retail and traveling sales teams across the country. Employees can be more productive with standardized applications across devices while IT gains visibility through centralized infrastructure in their data center.

### BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Standardized application delivery ensures all employees are on the latest version
- Centralized infrastructure provides real-time visibility into retail and agronomy operations
- Streamlined training through virtualization reducing new employee onboarding to a single day

Southern States Cooperative wanted to standardize application delivery and centralize resource access for retail and agronomy locations along with field sales teams. Lacking a standardized method for deploying applications or monitoring point-of-sale activity in real-time, Southern States sought a virtualized platform capable of supporting more than 200 locations along with corporate office staff, without slowdown. Leveraging VMware Horizon® 6 Enterprise Edition, VMware Mirage™ and VMware App Volumes™, Southern States successfully deployed a fully virtualized solution in just one month with minimal resources.

Southern States Cooperative is a farmer-owned agricultural supply and services company based out of Richmond, Virginia. Established in 1923, Southern States formed as a 150-farmer cooperative to provide quality seed and farming products to its members. Today, the cooperative provides products and services to member-producers at the lowest cost possible to help them boost profitability.

### The Challenge

Southern States Cooperative operates one of the largest farmer-owned cooperatives in the United States. The company aims to deliver the best customer service and value to its patrons through hundreds of sales associates at 1,200 retail outlets that are owned, managed, or independent.

Within its retail stores and agronomy centers, Southern States used point-of-sale (POS) systems to process orders. These systems relied on applications downloaded to mobile devices that helped employees ring up products and find information for customers. However, the company lacked a standardized method for delivering these applications to in-store devices. The company struggled to ensure all store devices were up-to-date and had the correct application versions installed.

Southern States also manages a distributed salesforce that visits farmers to assess needs and make bulk purchase orders. Salespeople would visit farmers onsite, collect their orders and then process those orders when they returned to the office. Unfortunately, this process was slow and cumbersome, requiring travel time for the salesperson to make it back to the office before orders were fulfilled. This meant days or weeks passed before orders were processed, making it more difficult for farmers to plan ahead for deliveries. Southern States also lacked the visibility needed in the sales order process to make quick changes or record analytics of sales activity.

“VMware Horizon has given us the ability to deliver software faster across our retail and sales teams. By being able to standardize our point-of-sale and information systems on a single platform, we’re able to guarantee what the end user experience will feel like.”

STEVEN TUPPONCE,  
MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE  
DELIVERY SERVICES,  
SOUTHERN STATES COOPERATIVE

#### VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- VMware Horizon® 6 Enterprise Edition
- VMware Mirage™
- VMware App Volumes™

“We wanted to centralize the point-of-sale and agronomy systems, so we had real-time visibility in our retail locations and in the field,” said Steven Tupponce, manager of infrastructure delivery services, Southern States Cooperative. “At the same time, we needed an anywhere, anytime platform for employees on mobile and laptop devices. We wanted our employees to work in the stores, at the farms and on the road without losing functionality—all this while lowering our total cost of ownership.”

#### The Solution

To deliver solutions to its retail and sales teams, Southern States chose VMware Horizon 6 Enterprise Edition to virtualize desktops and applications to streamline employee workloads and improve productivity.

The company uses Horizon 6 Enterprise Edition to deliver important POS applications to company devices within its retail stores. Employees use these applications to check out customers and research products from the sales floor. Back-office computers in retail stores are provisioned with a single software image containing the operating system and important applications needed for store management. When updates are required, Southern States quickly deploys new application versions or images over-the-air without requiring employee involvement.

“VMware Horizon has given us the ability to deliver software faster across our retail and sales teams,” said Tupponce. “By being able to standardize our point-of-sale and information systems on a single platform, we’re able to guarantee what the end user experience will feel like. This makes it easier to bring new employees on the team and helps our veterans work more effectively.”

Southern States uses Horizon 6 Enterprise Edition and Mirage to enable its traveling sales teams to better serve customers in the field. Mobile devices and laptops used by salespeople are configured with appropriate applications and backend resources for their jobs. With Horizon 6 Enterprise Edition, sales employees can draft and execute purchase orders onsite without having to wait to get back to a company office. The company configures these devices remotely, virtually updating mobile applications so salespeople can spend more time with customers than on paperwork.

#### Business Results & Benefits

With virtualized desktops and applications, Southern States outfits its retail and sales teams with the tools they need to deliver the best value to their customers. Whether in stores, at agronomy units across the country or while meeting with customers on their farms, employees remain connected and updated with the latest information on devices in their pockets. Thanks to VMware, Southern States has seen a number of benefits that simplify IT management, increase employee productivity and deliver greater experiences for customers.

#### Increased IT visibility with minimal in-store footprint

Southern States needed a solution capable of supporting devices without requiring physical infrastructure at each store. With VMware Horizon, Southern States now centrally monitors and manages deployments remotely. This helps the company reduce hardware costs and improve reporting.

“By going with VMware Horizon, we are able to go to a zero-server footprint in each one of our retail and agronomy locations,” said Tupponce. “VMware Horizon helped us decouple our point-of-sale applications from end-user devices in stores and have them reside within the data center. This not only makes it easier to keep employees equipped, but it makes it easier for auditing.”

VMware also enables Southern States to centralize its applications and desktops for easy updating and troubleshooting. Whether on back office computers, POS devices on the retail floor or sales laptops, Southern States configures and pushes changes to devices immediately. With frequent application updates, Southern States IT teams now have a streamlined method for getting information to devices.

“We had bi-monthly application releases that we needed to get to employees in stores,” said Tupponce. “To deploy these to devices effectively in a physical environment would have been difficult to guarantee. With VMware Horizon, we’re able to update one device image and push that out to all the devices at once. It’s absolutely astounding that we can manage and deploy virtual machines and any application to end users seamlessly. This is really going to move the industry and our business forward.”

#### Consistent experience across retail stores

By centralizing their infrastructure and visibility into devices across hundreds of retail outlets and employees’ hands, Southern States now better controls both the point-of-sale and end-user experience. As a result, the company can guarantee customers receive a consistently high-quality experience no matter where they go or who they speak with, and they also simplified the onboarding process for new employees.

“In the past, it could take weeks to onboard a new employee, but now we’re able to onboard employees within one day through Horizon,” said Tupponce. “That consistency has also helped us fulfill part of our neighborly mission: creating a more unified company culture. We are a family. We are Southern States.”

#### Looking Ahead

Southern States now wants to expand their retail environment from 500 to 1,500 devices and deploy another 500 new devices for wholesale employees. This would increase their total rollout to 2,000 within the next eight months. In addition, the company wants to explore use cases for VMware App Volumes and VMware AirWatch® Content Locker™ to further their innovation in business mobility.

