

From Software Update to VDI Upgrade

A Custom-Built Solution for High Process Capability



At a Glance

- Customized solution for 37 users with a heavy document management software
- Reduced IT requests by 30%
- Bolstered VDI session resources increasing speeds by 45%
- Repurposed vWorkspace hardware, equipping two physical servers with Citrix XenServer
- Configured an EqualLogic SAN with virtual servers
- Ported a voice over IP server to the virtual environment
- Completed on-site installation, testing and training within 3 weeks

Tuscaloosa Housing Authority (THA) is a quasi-governmental entity that enters and executes contracts and other instruments. The organization provides low to moderate-income residents of Tuscaloosa, AL with a high standard of safe and affordable housing.

THA worked with Logical Front on a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) project which included installing vWorkspace one year prior. Although not seeking a features upgrade, Dell's discontinuation of vWorkspace drove THA to replace the software. With 37 existing VDI users, a variety of USB printers and a team often working with large documents, the organization needed a unique approach beyond the scope of any out-of-the-box solution.

"My first call was to Logical Front," said Rob Wise, Network Administrator at THA. "I wanted to see what we could do about upgrading to something else and I wanted to know what that something else was. Since they did the installation before, they knew our system really well. I wanted to be sure they had the first opportunity to help us."

"Their virtualization was already in place," remarked Chris Rose, Implementation Engineer for Logical Front. "They just needed to replace the vWorkspace software to get where they needed to be."

Customized Solution for Light Workforce, Heavy Software

As Dell placed vWorkspace on a feature freeze and continued to support bug-fixes only, the IT team was eager for the upgrade. Together they devised a project with an estimated three-week timeframe, broken down into two weeks for installation and one week for testing and training.

Because of some of the specific needs of THA, Logical Front recommended Citrix and upgraded desktops to manage capacity demands. Document management is a primary role of the organization. THA uses DocuPhase, an Enterprise Automation Platform designed to edit, move and store large documents. DocuPhase and the hardware required to support it was integrated into the overall solution.

"It runs really well. This new system has skyrocketed my production. My IT requests are down by at least 30 percent"

- Rob Wise, THA Network Administrator

"Although THA had a relatively small environment, we had a lot of technological hurdles," said Rose. "Making sure specialized software worked correctly, moving to network printers, making the individual virtual desktops a bit beefier than average, and giving them extra RAM and hard drive capacity. What they do with the documents requires a lot of caching on the desktops, they needed more than a traditional VDI desktop would require."

Rose mentioned the many hours the installation team from Logical Front spent testing the VDI system. This testing allowed them to determine exactly how many resources to give each desktop within the confines of what their server could manage properly.

"A lot of organizations come in with a cookie-cutter approach," said Wise. "they actually came in and did what I needed them to do, they figured out every hurdle we needed to jump."

The installation process included repurposing original vWorkspace hardware, equipping two physical servers with Citrix, configuring an EqualLogic SAN storing a handful of virtual servers, and porting over a Voice over IP server. In addition, Logical Front spent time ensuring the new

document management server was running in the environment and updated the USB printers to a network printing system.

Faster VDI = Fewer IT Requests

"Upgrading to the Citrix system has been a blessing in disguise," reported Wise, "It runs really well. This new system has skyrocketed my production. My IT requests are down by at least 30 percent."

Wise describes the new system as a lot more manageable. While decreasing the amount of extra time he spends in the office, he can now proactively schedule new projects. Wise is currently updating their Enterprise Automation Platform.

And the upgrade is certainly felt among the tight team of users at THA. Prior to the upgrade, many users had reservations and were not excited for the change.

"Once we got the project completed and the bugs worked out, literally nothing but good things have been said about it," said Wise.

The team has noticed the increase in speed, and commented on their increase in productivity. Wise estimates virtual desktop session speeds have increased by 45%. Instead of waiting on errors or contacting IT, they are empowered to work seamlessly, and according to Wise, "do what they are supposed to do."

Having both executed projects on his own and contracted through other third parties in the past, Wise is well-versed in the pros and cons of both. In past projects he has run into frustration with vendors who insist on working during the 9-5 work day, a critical time when his users rely on the system to function properly.

"I wanted Logical Front to take over this project because of the good relationship I had with them on the first project," added Wise. "Literally- the ability to go above and beyond on anything I could ever ask. To stay on the phone late at night trying to help me figure out what is causing this problem or that problem. The ability to talk with them after hours and help me get things done was beyond my expectations."

ABOUT LOGICAL FRONT

Founded In 2003, Logical Front LLC, continues to forge alliances with best-in-class offerings to create an Integrated solution for its clients. The company offers desktop and server virtualization with data storage, server hardware, network infrastructures, and end-device management, alongside consulting and training. Learn more at logicalfront.com

ABOUT TUSCALOOSA HOUSING AUTHORITY

As a public housing agency, Tuscaloosa Housing Authority (THA) is a quasi-governmental entity created by resolution of the City of Tuscaloosa, AL in 1951. THA's mission is to provide a high standard of safe and affordable housing to the low to moderate-income residents of Tuscaloosa. Learn more at tuscaloosahousing.org