

The Weather Channel

The Weather Channel Companies (TWCC) delivers weather, news and information through The Weather Channel television network, that reaches more than 100 million U.S. households



The Challenge

Weather happens everywhere, often in unpredictable ways—so The Weather Channel has to be equally far-reaching and dynamic in its coverage. This poses significant challenges for IT. Beyond providing management and back-office personnel with business applications, the company must enable producers and reporters in every part of the country and on the road to access high-end video and editorial systems at a moment's notice. While reporting on the weather, the company remains as vulnerable to its impact as any company: "Our broadcasting and web operations are 24 x 7, so if there's a severe weather crisis, people need to be able to work from home as if they were in the office," says Andy Drooker, Senior Director of Emerging Platforms/Technologies at The Weather Channel.

Even meeting the demands of users within its own newsroom was difficult enough. Freelancers and employees competed to use the newest computers. Workers often needed additional software or RAM to complete projects, stretching thin a small IT staff that at times could provide only one technician per 150 users. Desktop virtualization offered a way to standardize the company's computing environment, centralize management and increase IT efficiency, as well as to deliver complete resources

The Company Background

The Weather Channel digital properties, including the weather.com website, The Weather Channel Desktop and The Weather Channel Mobile, which reach more than 45 million unique users per month; and Weather Services International (WSI), which provides business-to-business weather services, particularly for the media, aviation, marine and energy sectors.

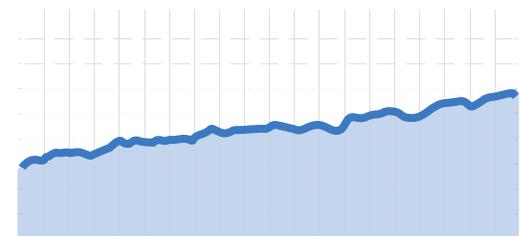
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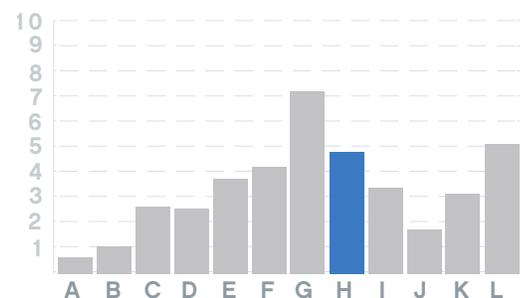
On demand to workers in any location. A conversation Drooker had at a Microsoft Worldwide Partnership conference suggested a way forward: complementing the free Microsoft Hyper-V virtualization allowed under the company's Microsoft licenses with Citrix XenDesktop virtual desktops. "It hit the bull's-eye—it was exactly what we were looking for," says Drooker. "We can pool applications—including both internal and external resources—and deploy virtual desktops to users either on a one-to-one basis, or as a pool of virtual desktops for folks to log into and use.

VIRTUALIZING DESKTOPS WITH CITRIX XENDESKTOP AND MICROSOFT HYPER-V

The longstanding partnership between Citrix and Microsoft ensured a seamless addition of Citrix XenDesktop to the Microsoft Hyper-V stack. With the leadership of Drooker, The Weather Channel, completed a proof of concept with Centrinet, a local Citrix and Microsoft V-Alliance partner based in Atlanta, which delivered virtual desktops tailored to the needs of 65 workers in every part of the enterprise. Ken Pischke, technical account manager at CentriNet, worked with The Weather Channel through the POC process. "Once people see the POC taking shape, they see the savings, the ease of management and the ability to have their desktop on any device, anywhere. All that comes with the virtual desktop model". said Pischke. Administrative personnel were provided with access to Microsoft Office applications; producers and reporters accessed standardized news writing and video production tools on demand. "The need for a homogeneous desktop in the newsroom is critical, so everybody is looking at the same content within the same applications," explains Drooker.



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The Solution

ENSURING BOTH BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND A GOOD WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The guiding principle of The Weather Channel's IT department is to deploy technology that provides the greatest benefit to both the company and its workers. By enabling the company to deliver a full virtual desktop on demand to any location, even over limited bandwidth, Citrix helps The Weather Channel ensure uninterrupted operations while allowing ample flexibility for users. "We want to help workers get their job done more easily and efficiently, and also give them the freedom to work at home as if they were in the office. Citrix helps us provide a better work-life balance by letting workers access all the resources they need to work at home, with the performance to edit video, produce stories and update our website as easily as if they were in the office.

IMPROVING IT EFFICIENCY AND SPEED THROUGH CENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT

Citrix desktop virtualization helps The Weather Channel deliver responsive support to hundreds of widely dispersed users through a small IT staff. New applications can be made available almost instantly. When increased memory or processing power is needed to complete a job, Drooker's team can deliver the needed resources in minutes—even across the country. In the past, a failed or malfunctioning laptop had to be shipped back to headquarters for repair, with a temporary replacement sent in return, exposing the company to the risk of loss, theft or damage in transit. Now, the machine can be upgraded dynamically, or any other available computer used in its place. "It can be an old,

Key Benefits Of Centrinet's upgrading Weather Channel's IT department

- Deliver a full virtual desktop on demand to any location
- Ability to edit video, produce stories and update our website as easily as if they were in the office.
- Making all of those applications accessible anywhere, on any device.
- Helps The Weather Channel deliver responsive support to hundreds of widely dispersed users through a small IT staff.

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beat-up machine—as long as they have a connected browser on it, they can access the resources they need. And we don't have to worry about security issues, says Drooker.

REDUCING COST OF OWNERSHIP

By enabling a high definition experience on any computer, even for graphics-intensive video and editing software, Citrix has eliminated the need for frequent hardware refreshes. Citrix HDX RichGraphics with RemoteFX lets The Weather Channel leverage Microsoft RemoteFX technology to accelerate performance for multiple users sharing a single Hyper-V server. “With HDX Rich Graphics with RemoteFX, I don't need to spend all that money on high-end graphics cards for every workstation; instead, I can put a single high-end NVIDIA graphics card in my server and deliver high definition video to any number of users, even on thin clients,” says Drooker.

With its proof of concept complete, The Weather Channel is now moving to deploy Citrix-powered virtual desktops across its entire 300-person workforce. “People are already calling me wanting to get on virtual desktops, says Drooker. “We're achieving high value for our users at a minimal ownership cost, and we're excited to move forward.

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