



Using Technology to Move Bytes and Boxes



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Jeff Crawley

*Manager of the Global Resource for
Information Decentralization*

(GRID) Program

Federal Express

Federal Express, Memphis, Tennessee

FedEx has long been known for using advanced technology to support its global customer base. However, a mainframe computing environment and text-based 3270 terminals couldn't support new and innovative approaches to mission-critical solutions.

So the company began moving toward a distributed client/server computing approach—but found its problems compounded by the difficulty and expense of managing and keeping current a PC-based desktop environment.

How could FedEx leverage its expertise in developing state-of-the-art Windows®-based applications and still manage tens of thousands of desktops, provide rapid application deployment, and control costs?

A Better Solution: Wyse Winterm Thin Clients

“Fat clients were not only costing us a lot of money to buy and maintain, they were outdated as soon as they came out of the box,” says Ancel Hankins, a FedEx desktop engineer. Wyse® Winterm™ thin clients, however, combine TN3270 terminal emulation with easy access to Windows-, browser-, and Java-based applications, delivering maximum performance and flexibility. And centralized software control ensures simple and virtually instantaneous deployment of new applications to thousands of users simultaneously.

Solution Architecture

- Wyse® Winterm™ thin clients
- Servers:
 - Various Windows NT Server configurations Microsoft® Windows NT 4.0, Terminal Server Edition, with Citrix® MetaFrame® server software

Other Concerns Resolved

FedEx required a solution that would allow rapid deployment of strategic, modern tools for mission-critical operations, the ability to quickly respond to changing business requirements, prompt response to performance and capacity issues, removal of inflexible system constraints, and elimination of a single point of failure.

With thin-client technology, the company will meet all these needs. Wyse thin-client devices allow FedEx to develop and deploy applications on its platform of choice. Fully integrated, 16-bit stereo sound facilitates introduction of multimedia solutions. The automatic fail-over capabilities of the Winterm terminals provide protection from failure. And performance, capacity, and desktop management issues are all streamlined because Winterm devices can be managed remotely by a centralized team of information services experts.

A Successful Installation

FedEx began its successful installation by upgrading to a high-speed Frame Relay network. It then set up centralized data centers that house clusters of Windows NT 4.0, Terminal Server Edition systems and provide fast access to Windows-based applications. To date, over 4,000 Winterm thin clients have been deployed. "The feedback has been very good," says Jeff Crawley, manager of the Global Resource for Information Decentralization (GRID) Program. "Now we can control the desktop and give employees the tools that they need. Our biggest challenge is to meet demand from the field offices."

Results

Information services expertise is centralized for maximum efficiency. Users access Microsoft® Office software and Windows-based applications for customer service, ground operations and dispatch, as well as airport-based weather and maintenance operations. Total cost of ownership is dramatically improved and users have a single point of access for all their computing needs.

Widened Deployment in the Future

FedEx is quickly providing users with access to the new tools, beginning with roll-out of a limited number of Winterm thin clients to every FedEx location in the United States. Over time, they will expand deployment, replacing all text-based terminals and most PCs.



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