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Via Christi Hospital Pittsburg mobilizes clinicians for better care with Citrix app virtualization

Based in Wichita, Via Christi Health is the largest provider of healthcare services in Kansas. Its hospital in Pittsburg, Kansas, is licensed for 188 beds and offers a cancer center, heart center, Level III trauma center and specialty services including minimally invasive robotic-assisted surgery. In April 2013, Via Christi became part of Ascension Health, the largest Catholic and largest nonprofit health system in the nation.

Challenge

In 2013, the Pittsburg hospital faced a challenge. The IT team had been delivering Meditech, the electronic health record system, to workstations throughout the hospital with Citrix Presentation Server 4.5 for several years and recognized the need to upgrade this legacy solution. "We originally implemented the Citrix environment to reduce desktop costs and enable clinicians to move from one machine to another with a consistent experience," said Chad Pease, operations manager. However, the team began experiencing issues with printing, the Profile Manager capability, and the thin clients used as workstations. Meanwhile, the datacenter had become complex as a result of adding servers to host new iterations of the software.

Anticipating the end of life of Presentation Server as well as Microsoft Windows 2003, the operating system it supported, Pease and his team experimented unsuccessfully with other options, including hot desking with zero clients, before deciding to seek outside assistance with an upgrade to Citrix XenApp, the Citrix application virtualization solution.

A strategic goal for the project was greater mobility for clinicians. "Our physicians are beginning to use tablets and smartphones and wanted to be able to access Meditech modules on these devices," Pease explained. "They also wanted secure access beyond the walls of the hospital – in clinics, offices and even at home." Another critical aspect of mobility was roaming capability – seamlessly and securely carrying a user session from one device to another.

However, the immediate pain point requiring resolution was clinician frustration with lengthy logins. "We were getting a lot of feedback about the excessive number of clicks and seconds required to log into the system. Because clinicians move from

> "Burwood Group modernized our Citrix environment, making it more stable and much easier to manage. We have been very pleased with Burwood's Citrix expertise, as well as their understanding of the unique requirements of healthcare organizations."
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> *Chad Pease, Operations Manager*
> *Via Christi Hospital Pittsburg*

one workstation to another multiple times during the day, they were eager to streamline the process so they could spend more time on direct patient care. They were adamant about improvements being made to the login process."

Solution

The IT team had recently worked with Burwood Group, a Gold Citrix Solution Advisor specializing in healthcare clients, on a successful wireless infrastructure design and deployment. After learning that Burwood could also assist with a XenApp upgrade, Pease got approval for the implementation.

"We were very pleased that Burwood sent their Citrix Certified Integration Architect, Chad Price, on site. We've had situations in the past where a vendor lacked the right qualifications. Chad was not only fully qualified for the build, he added a lot of value by giving us advice about future-proofing the solution. For example, he suggested moving away from Web Interface to Citrix StoreFront to support upcoming versions of XenApp. We've been very happy with it." StoreFront delivers virtual desktops and apps to just about any computing device, thus expanding the device support offered by Web Interface. All that is required is the appropriate Citrix Receiver client.

Another highlight of the project was speed – Burwood Group completed the implementation ahead of schedule, in just six weeks. Pease added, "Even after the project was finished, Chad was very happy to help us with questions."

The new XenApp environment, running on Windows Server 2008 R2, supports approximately 100 concurrent users – mainly clinicians – who are accessing the Meditech solution on Windows 7 embedded thin clients from HP. These devices were selected, in part, for compatibility with XenApp. Single sign-on (SSO) access to the environment is provided by Imprivata OneSign, which integrates with the Citrix technology. It significantly reduces clicks and eliminates the need to remember or enter usernames and passwords for individual applications – in this case, the 20 modules of Meditech used by the hospital.

Although the IT team is currently using Citrix Access Gateway for secure app delivery over the network, plans call for implementing Citrix NetScaler 5550 appliances offering advanced NetScaler Gateway capability, server load balancing and SSL offload.

Results

According to Pease, the greatest benefit of the XenApp environment is enhanced clinician mobility. "Physicians and nurses really enjoy using the new system. They now have the flexibility to access Meditech at clinics and offices outside the hospital. Some are adopting mobile devices such as tablets, and we expect the bring-your-own-device trend to become more pervasive."

Whether at an outside location or roaming within the hospital's five-story tower, clinicians are saving time and effort by carrying their virtual XenApp session from one device to another. "They simply walk up to a workstation, tap their badge and enter user-

name and password, and the SSO functionality logs them into the system. If they forget to tap out, the workstation locks automatically for security purposes after they walk away. Then, at the next workstation, the Citrix session opens again at the tap of the badge. That session will remain active for a full hour."

The combination of Citrix SmoothRoaming capability and SSO saves precious minutes for clinicians, who can now spend more time on direct patient care. This technology contributes to patient and provider satisfaction and improved health outcomes.

"The updated XenApp solution we provided not only resolved a number of challenges for Via Christi, it enhanced the mobility and satisfaction of the hospital's clinical staff. We believe this winning design and build can serve as a template for other hospitals within the health system."

Chad Price, Senior Consultant
Burwood Group

Other benefits of the solution include single image management and optimized printing capability and control. Pease commented, "We really like the new print server setup in XenApp. Recently, a printer went down on a Friday, and it took me less than 60 seconds to change the printing to a nearby department. Citrix undoubtedly saved my weekend."

The environment is much more stable and easier to maintain, as well. Importantly, help desk calls from users have declined significantly. All these factors have relieved the administrative burden on the 12-person IT team. "It's really been a blessing."

To standardize with Ascension Health, the Pittsburg hospital will ultimately phase out Meditech and implement Cerner Millennium, which will also be virtualized and delivered with XenApp.

Key benefits

- Optimizes mobility for clinicians within and outside the hospital
- Streamlines clinician roaming with SSO and session transfer
- Enables application access on a range of mobile devices
- Frees up clinician time that can be spent on patient care
- Reduces IT administration and help desk calls
- Provides greater system stability and improves printer control