



## Reliability and Consistency Key for Small Business



*"Our employees love the thin clients because of the speed.*

*They are the definition of reliability and consistency."*

*Walter Picanco*

*Network Administrator*

*The Precept Group*

### **The Precept Group, Waterloo, Ontario**

The Precept Group is a full-service insurance and financial planning company founded in 1998 with 12 offices throughout Ontario, Canada. Like many small businesses, the Precept Group relies on technology and Internet access to provide their service.

Professionals at branch offices work with customers to identify insurance needs and use Agency Manager software and other tools to find the best options.

To support their mission-critical IT infrastructure, the Precept Group has one technician at the central office and relies on RLB System Solutions for IT support, management, and planning.

### **Problem: The High Cost of Support for Aging Computers**

The Precept Group adopted network-centric computing to support branch offices several years ago. Application servers at the central office provide users with access to all the applications and data they need to service clients at local offices. The switch eliminated the need for purchasing new PCs, but the company spent the savings on supporting the aging computers. Even though the older PCs worked as thin clients—users logged in to the Citrix servers to work—they still needed patches and driver updates for Windows® 98 or Windows 95 to work with local printers.

The technicians spent their time diagnosing problems, managing updates, and fixing printer problems, and they also spent a lot of time on the road. Community offices for the Precept Group are up to 150 miles away from the main office and reaching distant locations in the winter months often meant long trips in treacherous conditions.

### Solution Architecture

- Wyse® Winterm™ thin clients
- User Applications
  - Microsoft® Office Suite, Internet Explorer
  - Agency Manager plus other industry and proprietary software
  - Wyse™ Rapport® software
- Network
  - 3 load balanced servers at the central office
  - VPN branch connections
  - Windows® Server 2000
  - Citrix® MetaFrame® XP

### Solution: Wyse Winterm Thin Clients

To lower repair costs and improve reliability, the insurance company replaced failing computers with Wyse® Winterm™ thin clients.

About the size of a paperback book, Wyse Winterm thin clients take up less space on the desktop, have a faster boot time, and a lower cost per unit than traditional fat clients. When older computers fail, the IT staff does not spend time trying to diagnose and solve the problem or traveling to the site. A new thin client is configured and mailed to the location where the user swaps out the failing device and replaces it in a matter of minutes.

If a user has a problem with printing or using the system, they simply call the help desk in Waterloo. The IT support staff can log in to the desktop of the remote user with Virtual Network Computing (VNC) and fix the problem, demonstrating to the employee what to do.

### Speed and Size Win Approval

"At first, employees were surprised. They said, 'that's a computer?'" said Walter Picanco, the network administrator at the Precept Group. "After it was installed, they loved it. They love the thin clients because of the speed." For Precept Group employees, the thin clients are faster, smaller, and quieter than a traditional fat client.

Applications and data are managed in the central office on three load-balanced servers and all of the remote users log in to the system with a unique username and password. Users cannot download or copy information to their desktop or install applications locally, reducing the risk of viruses, data loss, and user-introduced system problems.

Picanco has only had one help desk call for a thin client since the switch began, and the problem turned out to be a faulty keyboard. When the switch from PCs to thin clients is complete, Picanco expects to have more time to focus on improving the company website and streamlining business processes.

### A New Computing Standard

"When we first came to help the Precept Group," said Richard Mash, senior engineer at RLB System Solutions, an IT solutions company hired to manage the Precept Group's systems, "users expected the systems to be unavailable at times during the week. Now they don't have that. The system is available 6am to midnight, all week." By the end of 2005, RLB expects to have replaced all of the fat clients at the Precept Group with longer lasting, more reliable Wyse Winterm thin clients.



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