

Infrastructure Optimization

Evidence Case Study: AUSTAR

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AUSTAR Transforms Desktop Deployment with Dimension Data Solution

AUSTAR's standard operating environment images for desktop and notebook computers were difficult to manage and keep up to date, affecting staff productivity. A solution from partner Dimension Data based on the Microsoft® Infrastructure Optimization model helped AUSTAR to automatically deploy, update, secure, and centrally manage its desktop computers. Applications and updates can now be delivered and managed cost effectively and with enhanced security.

Situation

Austar United Communications (AUSTAR) is a leading provider of subscription television services in regional and rural Australia, with more than half a million customers enjoying principally satellite digital television services. Internet and mobile telephony services complete AUSTAR's product offering, with the company rolling out a WiMAX-based broadband network from 2006.

AUSTAR is also a significant provider of programming in the Australian television market through its 50 percent-owned joint venture, XYZnetworks, which owns and/or distributes Nickelodeon, Nick Jr, Discovery Channel, Channel [V], Club [V], MAX, Arena, The Lifestyle Channel, Lifestyle Food, CountryMusic Channel, and The Weather Channel.

Liberty Global, the largest broadband cable operator outside the United States in terms of subscribers and owner of interests in broadband distribution and content companies operating outside the continental United States, holds a controlling stake in AUSTAR.

AUSTAR's desktop and server systems were running Microsoft Windows NT® operating system version 4.0, reducing application performance and affecting productivity across the organization. The problem was most pronounced in the company's 600-seat call center, the hub of its business operations. Unresponsive applications increased the time it took to deal with customer enquiries or problems. As a result, the IT department was tied up dealing with frequent desktop support calls.

In addition, AUSTAR needed to maintain multiple standard operating environment (SOE) images to cater to the wide range of desktop and notebook computers in the organization. This resulted in high management and maintenance costs as each image required hours of building and on-site engineering support.

The company experienced difficulties installing newer applications that were not designed for its older and unsupported operating system. Deploying updates and antivirus signatures was a manual and time-consuming process.

"We wanted to build a system that could automatically deliver a standard image to PCs across the organization," said Phil Blackwell, Infrastructure and Systems Manager at AUSTAR. "We also needed a way to upgrade the image with new applications or patches without having to repeat the entire build process."



<http://www.austar.com.au>

Country or Region: Australia

Customer Size: 800 employees

Industry: Media and Entertainment

Partner: Dimension Data

Customer Profile:

AUSTAR is a leading Australian subscription TV provider. It also offers Internet and mobile telephony services.

Business Situation:

AUSTAR's desktop and server systems were running Microsoft® Windows NT® version 4.0, reducing application performance. AUSTAR needed to maintain multiple standard operating environment images for its range of computers, resulting in high management and maintenance costs.

Solution:

Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner Dimension Data implemented a solution based on its Infrastructure Optimization range of services. The solution incorporates automatic deployment and management of Microsoft Windows®, Microsoft Office, and other programs.

Benefits:

- Standardized software environment
- Zero-touch desktop deployment
- Enterprise Agreement that simplifies management

Software and Services*:

- Microsoft Active Directory®
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Microsoft Systems Management Server 2.0
- Microsoft Windows XP Professional

Vertical Industries:

- Radio, Television, Cable, and Satellite Industry

AUSTAR put out a tender for a vendor to upgrade its desktop environment from Windows NT 4.0 to the Microsoft Windows® XP Professional operating system. At the same time, AUSTAR went to tender for new desktop and laptop hardware.

The solution needed to reduce the complexities and ongoing operational costs of managing its desktop environment and pave the way for a planned migration from Novell eDirectory and Lotus Notes to the Microsoft Active Directory® service (part of Windows XP) and Microsoft Exchange Server 2003.

Solution

AUSTAR invited a number of local systems integrators to submit proposals for professional services to analyze, plan, design, and implement a Microsoft desktop and server infrastructure.

Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Dimension Data submitted a proposal based on its Infrastructure Optimization range of services. These are based on the Microsoft Infrastructure Optimization model, which was developed by Microsoft and leading technology analysts based on industry best practices and Microsoft's experience with enterprise customers.

The Microsoft desktop management architecture incorporates tool sets and prescriptive processes that can be used to automate and streamline desktop deployments and simplify their ongoing management. Infrastructure Optimization utilizes the capabilities of Active Directory, Microsoft Systems Management Server, and the Business Desktop Deployment methodology.

Dimension Data is a specialist IT services and solution provider that helps clients plan, build, and support their IT infrastructure. Dimension Data applies its expertise in networking, security, operating environments, application integration, storage and contact center technologies, and its unique skills in consulting, integration, and managed services to create customized solutions.

Dimension Data completed a proof of concept to demonstrate the solution's capabilities and was awarded the project based on the success of this demonstration.

The solution incorporated the ability to automatically deploy, update, secure, and centrally manage Windows, Microsoft Office, and other applications, ensuring desktop SOEs could be delivered and managed efficiently and cost effectively.

"Dimension Data had proven and well-thought-out processes for desktop deployment," said Blackwell. "The company's experience in building and managing SOEs also gave us confidence."

AUSTAR chose Microsoft Global Alliance Partner Dell to upgrade and standardize its fleet of desktops and notebooks, as well as its server infrastructure.

As part of the project, AUSTAR signed a three-year Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft that included Software Assurance support. It chose a standard platform of Windows XP and Office Professional 2003, backed by server software including Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server and Systems Management Server 2.0.

Dimension Data used its Desktop Deployment Planning Services methodology to audit and assess AUSTAR's technology environment.

Desktop Deployment Planning Services are designed to minimize the effort and costs of desktop lifecycle management. First, an experienced consultant analyzes the existing environment and business imperatives and produces a comprehensive summary of the challenges, tools, and best practices required to help the company formulate a

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Infrastructure and Systems Manager

AUSTAR

desktop deployment plan. This process also includes producing cost model summaries to examine different desktop deployment scenarios and cost structures based on the company's budget and needs.

This analysis found that AUSTAR had to address the following issues:

- No standard operating system image
- Every desktop was unique after deployment
- Inconsistent update management
- Images deployed manually using CD-ROMs
- Limited application testing

Dimension Data then applied its Dynamic Desktop Deployment services to help AUSTAR address these issues. Dynamic Desktop Deployment allows companies to deploy a single reference image to any Windows-based computer regardless of its hardware configuration. This significantly reduces the number of images the organization needs to maintain, slashing management costs. Dimension Data also provides automated integration and sociability testing tools to reduce the risk of compatibility issues once an update or new application is deployed.

Systems Management Server 2003 is the engine that drives Dynamic Desktop Deployment. It provides comprehensive change and configuration management for the Microsoft environment. It helps organizations reduce software costs and stay compliant by giving them a better understanding of how many software licenses they own and how many they use. It also boosts the security of the Windows environment through reliable targeted delivery of updates. Dimension Data adds a range of services and processes around this software.

Dimension Data designed an SOE image for the new hardware environment and built a zero-touch solution for image and application delivery. This allowed desktop images to be centrally managed and deployed automatically over the network. It then prototyped and trialed the solution.

All 900 desktops were deployed within three months and the solution was live by the end of 2005. The Dimension Data team worked closely with AUSTAR staff onsite throughout the project to give them training and hands-on experience with the systems. "Dimension Data was completely dedicated to the project; it was just like having an extended workforce," said Blackwell. "They weren't distracted by other issues or clients; we had their full focus.

"Dimension Data's superior project management skills were central to the success of the project. They drew on their extensive experience and established open channels of communication with all parts of our business to ensure the smooth rollout of the project."

Benefits

Standardized Software Environment

Having all desktops working with current software makes it easy for AUSTAR to track application and operating system distribution, management and updates.

"We now have a known software baseline that we can update as patches come out," said Blackwell. "We also have a comprehensive staging environment which means our system and all updates we deploy are stable and tested."

In addition, improved desktop deployment means AUSTAR can roll out security updates and patches quickly and effectively.

Zero-Touch Desktop Deployment

AUSTAR can now deploy an SOE image to multiple PCs across the organization in approximately 30 minutes, rather than the several hours required previously. Eliminating

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manual processes means the business is also more flexible and adaptable in responding to business requirements.

"Systems Management Server is critical to the zero-touch solution," says Blackwell. "It manages deploying our applications and the base image."

The support burden on the IT department has been significantly reduced, allowing these staff to focus on using IT to build business value. The time the IT department spent fixing desktop problems has also been reduced, driving down costs.

"Dimension Data's methodology has transformed our desktop deployment processes and infrastructure," said Blackwell. "We've increased security, improved productivity, and now have the ability to do zero-touch deployments and upgrades. We can also take advantage of automated software distribution, management, and tracking."

Enterprise Agreement Simplifies Management

A three-year Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft has simplified the ease of administration for the IT department.

"The Enterprise Agreement allowed us to standardize our software environment, so we only have one suite of applications to support," says Blackwell. "It's also simplified the upgrade process. We can add users as we need to but only have to true-up once."

Microsoft Software Assurance gives AUSTAR peace of mind that in the event of a problem, support is only a phone call away at any time of day.

**The following recently released product is now available:*
Microsoft Exchange Server 2007

Microsoft Infrastructure Optimization

With infrastructure optimization, you can build a secure, well-managed, and dynamic core IT infrastructure that can reduce overall IT costs, make better use of resources, and become a strategic asset for the business. The Infrastructure Optimization model—with basic, standardized, rationalized, and dynamic levels—was developed by Microsoft using industry best practices and Microsoft's own experiences with enterprise customers. The Infrastructure Optimization model provides a maturity framework that is flexible and easily used as a benchmark for technical capability and business value.

For more information about infrastructure optimization, visit:
www.microsoft.com/io

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