



Montgomery County Deploys Desktop Virtualization and Mobility to Better Serve Its Citizens

Montgomery County needed to respond to mobile and remote access demands from various employee constituencies—from field health workers to judges and sheriffs. It needed an environment where employees could access all their desktops, applications, and online services remotely and securely, from any device on any platform, with single sign-on. It found just that with VMware® Horizon®, a desktop and application virtualization solution, and AirWatch® by VMware, an enterprise mobility management platform to ease desktop and device management for Montgomery County's IT while boosting employee productivity, protecting sensitive citizen data and cutting costs.

Montgomery County is the third largest county in Pennsylvania. It has a population of 800,000 and is home to major employers in the pharmaceutical, banking, manufacturing, and healthcare sectors. With a USD \$385 million budget and 3,000 employees, the county delivers a range of services, including social services, business development, public safety, court services, and infrastructure.

The Challenge

Montgomery County was doing IT the traditional way: the hard way. Whenever it implemented a new desktop rollout or a software update, IT staff got in their cars and drove to different departments around the county to physically perform the task. It was a serious operational pain point, and a pain in the neck.

For example, several years ago the county installed new desktop computers in every department. All departments had to fill out a form listing the applications they needed; then IT staff built the machines. It was cumbersome and time consuming. "And anything that could go wrong did go wrong," says Montgomery County Chief Technology Officer Anthony Olivieri. "It blew up in our faces on several occasions, which led to significant delays, additional funding and people resources being needed to make it right."

The county needed a better system for its IT team to deploy and support new desktops, and it needed that system to meet a number of specifications. It had to be secure, easy to update, and quick to expand. It had to deliver a consistent desktop throughout the county, for compliance reasons; and that desktop had to be accessible in a mobile environment in real time.

INDUSTRY

State and local government

LOCATION

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

KEY CHALLENGES

- Challenging, time-consuming hands-on workstation rollouts and software updates
- Limited desktop access to county workers—no remote or mobile access

SOLUTION

Montgomery County deployed VMware Horizon to give workers access to all their desktops, applications, and online services through one workspace, remotely and securely, from any device on any platform. Additionally they brought in AirWatch Enterprise Mobility Management™ to secure employee mobile devices.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Improved worker connectivity and mobility, increasing worker efficiency and productivity by up to 300%
- Reduced costs in areas such as mileage and overtime
- Streamlined and centralized IT management for both desktops and mobile devices

“I never needed to sell this technology to anyone—it sells itself. Users never notice the system is virtual. We have no complaints about speed or performance.”

Anthony Olivieri
CTO, Montgomery County

“You’re also dealing with a lot of files that only exist on the corporate network, so you need access to the network to do your job,” Olivieri says. “We needed a virtual desktop environment for workers to access their data and applications from anywhere and on any device, whether it’s their laptop, desktop, or a mobile device.”

The Solution

Montgomery County looked first at solutions like help-desk software that enables the deployment and updating of software. But these are heavy systems and they don’t deploy the underlying operating system (OS). Worse, Olivieri discovered, they tend not to deliver as advertised. “I had to find a better way,” he says, “and that better way led us to VMware Horizon.”

VMware Horizon gives users access to all their desktops, applications, and online services through one workspace, remotely and securely, from any device, on any platform. The hardware platform is an HP BladeSystem c7000 chassis with 256GB RAM and eight blades running six core processors. County workers access their virtual desktops on HP thin clients. The implementation supports hundreds of users but “they never notice the system is virtual,” Olivieri says. “We have no complaints about speed or performance.”

In conjunction with VMware Horizon, Montgomery County has also deployed an enterprise mobility management solution with AirWatch by VMware. AirWatch simplifies enterprise mobility by enabling management of any mobile device on any OS. It also allows Montgomery County to develop containers for workers who bring their own devices, so the county can separate its data from personal data on a device and pull data off the device if necessary.

As for support, Olivieri calls it flawless. “I deal with over 200 vendors and I wish I could say that about all of them. But in reality, there are just a few. There are providers out there that go the extra mile, and VMware is one of them.”

Business Benefits

A lot of government jobs are mobile by necessity. Workers have to get out in the field and meet the people. VMware Horizon provides key benefits for mobile workers.

For example, the Montgomery County Office of Aging and Adult Services employs case workers who meet regularly with clients and collect information. In the past, they had to go to the office every day, get their caseloads, go out in the field, service their cases, take notes, and then go back to the office at the end of the day and enter all the data. Now with VMware Horizon, they can take notes and enter data on their devices on site, in real time – eliminating trips back and forth to the office. Each case worker has improved from servicing one person in the field per day to three or four per day. Productivity is up at least 300 percent; mileage and overtime costs are down.

Departments across Montgomery County are more efficient with VMware Horizon. Health inspectors are able to spend more time in the field and make more visits. They can issue certificates and warnings right on site with their mobile devices. Sheriff’s deputies carry Apple iPads in the field to access their virtual desktops. They no longer need to go to the station, log on to the system, and print out all the warrants they’re going to serve each day. And they also no longer need to return to the station at the end of the day to enter data on the work they’ve done. Now they can do it all remotely. This has cut overtime costs and allowed deputies to serve more warrants.

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- VMware Horizon desktop and application virtualization solution
- AirWatch Enterprise Mobility Management™ solution

APPLICATIONS VIRTUALIZED

- Active Ink Filler – Health Dept – signature application
- EFS2.7 – Board of Assessment – Electronic field study
- OMS – Offender Management System – Look up inmate information
- DSI – Digital Solutions Inc. – Adult Probation application
- Skytrack North America Professional – Tracker used by Detectives
- JCRS – Juvenile Management System – Juvenile Probation

PLATFORM

- HP terminal
- HP BladeSystem c7000 chassis with 256GB RAM and eight blades running six core processors

“Same for our police detectives,” Olivieri says. “They used to take all sorts of hand notes and enter data. Now they can do everything from the road. They love it. They told me, ‘Give us virtual desktops or we’ll arrest you!’”

County judges also took to virtual desktops right away, using iPads to access and review cases without being tied down to their office workstations. County leadership loves having secure remote access, which gives them the flexibility to work anytime from anywhere without risk of data loss with AirWatch’s remote wipe clean capability.

Looking Ahead

Montgomery County plans to expand VMware Horizon throughout the county, extending the system to all of its 3,000 employees. Olivieri is building out the new production environment, taking into account redundancy, business continuity, fault tolerance, security, compliance, and more. “Right now, all the hardware has been stood up and we’re ready to go. We’re coming up with a strategy to migrate all users,” he says.

