



SUCCESS STORY

Catalyst Recruitment Systems Limited
Winter™ in Recruitment Industry



Leading Australian recruitment agency gets Wyse

Overview

After experiencing steady growth and initiating several acquisitions, Catalyst Recruitment Systems found it had an unwieldy patchwork of IT infrastructure spread among its 32 offices.

Conflicting bandwidths, and incompatible software and hardware, meant the infrastructure wasn't as stable as it could be. Catalyst needed to unify its IT infrastructure, but also wanted a system offering increased security to protect the large amount of payroll data on its network. With the help of its IT services provider,





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Total Network Support, Catalyst Recruitment Systems implemented a secure, cost-effective and easily managed system using thin clients from Wyse.

Background

Catalyst Recruitment Systems Ltd is an Australian-owned company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. It supplies human resource and recruitment services to more than 3,000 companies nationally. Catalyst was founded in 1991 in Melbourne, and has since expanded to include 180 staff in 28 offices around Australia, with its head office located in South Melbourne.

Operating under various brand names, Catalyst offers services to the executive, commercial, industrial, call centre, information technology, government, mining and wine industries. Catalyst is a diverse and flexible recruitment company. Offering services including payroll solutions, training, contracting, HR consulting, workload analysis and career development.

The Challenge

Information Technology is an important part of maintaining real-time communication between all of Catalyst's offices. It is also vital for processing the payroll of nearly 2,500 of Catalyst's clients' staff each week.

The ability to access payroll information on a stable platform, quickly and with integrity is critical to Catalyst's business. Craig Ashworth, CFO, Catalyst Recruitment Systems explained, "IT is an integral part of the service we provide to our clients. When our clients send timesheets through to us, there is no scope for error when calculating and distributing their pays. We can't afford to have a system that is falling down or being corrupted. Without a stable IT system we can't fill orders, can't pay people or collect cash."

As the organisation grew, Catalyst found that its IT infrastructure became highly disparate between offices. Ashworth continued, "Many of our offices were on conflicting bandwidths and configurations, using different software running off disparate servers. And, since the year 2000, Catalyst has made eight acquisitions which fragmented our IT systems further still.

"Our IT infrastructure wasn't consistent; it was a patchwork of systems that were difficult to manage and kept falling over due to non-compatibility issues. So rather than spend a great deal of time and money trying to fix it, we decided to replace the system with a unified platform, and create a single interface for all of our offices.

"Without a stable IT system we can't fill orders, can't pay people or collect cash"

Craig Ashworth
CFO
Catalyst
Recruitment



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“Security was another key area we wanted to improve. With so much critical and private payroll data on our network, we wanted to ensure that it was safe from both physical damage and viruses.

“The IT side of Catalyst is outsourced to a company called Total Network Support, and our instructions to them were to unify our platforms while providing an infrastructure that offered greater security,” said Ashworth.

A thin alternative

As a growing company, Catalyst needed a scalable IT infrastructure to accommodate future expansion. And, with a number of remote sites to maintain it needed an infrastructure that is cost effective to manage.

Stuart Fox, Operations Manager, Total Network Support (TNS) said, “When we began analysing Catalyst’s IT infrastructure, and consolidating all of its business arms onto one platform, a colleague at TNS suggested thin clients as an alternative to PCs.

“Thin clients are ideal for organisations with multiple sites because they’re easy to implement and can be configured and managed remotely, which lowers support costs. PC’s, by contrast, are much more costly to build, and maintenance tends to require that someone physically visit each site.

“Using thin clients, Catalyst could also achieve the increased security it was looking for as data is not stored on the terminals and they have no moving parts. This drastically limits the chance of losing or damaging information stored on the network.” said Fox.

TNS also considered the use of traditional desktop computers, but high support costs and compatibility issues encouraged them to focus on a thin client solution. Fox continued, “We looked at a range of thin client vendors but found that many products on the market were limited in their capabilities and were not that easy to use. We decided on the Wyse terminals because they were simple to use, and the company had a solid reputation as a thin client vendor.” said Fox.

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Stuart Fox
Operations Manager,
Total Network
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The Wyse solution

TNS chose to rollout the Wyse® Winterm™ 1200LE for Catalyst. The 1200LE is a completely stateless device so all of the terminal's settings are saved on the server for more control over the desktop experience. Its unique "ThinOS" software offers fast response interaction with applications running on a server, and the plug-and-play connectivity makes it easy to install out of the box.

"Initially we set up a test site with 10 users in one office, and while they were surprised by the Wyse thin clients at first, they quickly realised that the new system was much faster and more stable. It could take up to 10 minutes for staff to log-on to the old computers, but now they can connect and log on in under 10 seconds.

"Based on the success of the trial we began deploying 160 Wyse terminals to the rest of Catalyst's offices. The implementation took approximately two and half months and was part of a ten month complete overhaul which involved a WAN and backend infrastructure upgrade," Fox explained.

A secure and unified infrastructure

The resulting system connects Catalyst's 32 offices on the same platform and provides a more reliable, unified IT infrastructure. As a thin client solution, it's also easy-to-manage, highly robust and provides a greater degree of security.

"Thin clients are less prone to failure because they don't have their own hard drives with moving parts," said Fox. "And, because we can manage the thin clients remotely, if any support and maintenance issues crop up, they can be resolved quickly and simply.

If we need to add or replace a terminal, it's easy – we just ship a new one to the site and the user simply plugs it into the network and turns it on.

"We're also able to "shadow" users. If a user requires training, or is having trouble with a particular application, the support person can view the user's screen remotely which makes it easier to work through any problems with them.

"The thin clients also offer Catalyst increased security. The terminals have no peripherals or CD drives which makes them highly secure. You can't plug anything into the system and you can't copy data, so there is no possibility of information theft or viruses getting into the network. And, because nothing is stored on the terminals, if they were to be stolen or damaged there is no loss of confidential data." said Fox.

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Craig Ashworth agreed, "A major benefit of the Wyse thin clients is risk management. We used to have our servers at the back of each office, where anyone could break in and steal them, and if there had been a fire we would have lost a lot of our data. When you're pay rolling over two thousand people each week you can't afford for anything like that to happen. Now that all our information is stored on a centralised server, our system is more secure and there's less chance of anything disastrous happening. We're also building a backup site for our servers to further reduce our risk.

"We've significantly reduced the possibility of confidential information being compromised in any way, which is important for Catalyst in terms of payrolls, resumes and other personal records.

"The thin clients have been a satisfying replacement infrastructure. The introduction of thin clients to staff was relatively straight forward. If anything, it didn't take the staff long to realise the new system is much faster than what we had. They also like the fact that the thin clients take up much less desk space.

"We now have a system that's more unified which means it's more reliable, and in turn this means staff are more productive because things don't keep breaking down. By deploying a thin computing solution, we have a unified, stable and robust system which helps ensure we provide excellent service to our clients." concluded Ashworth.

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Solution Architecture

Applications accessed

Cat Track, Fast Track, Microsoft Office, Micropay, MYOB,
various recruitment applications

No of users

160

Wyse® Winterm™ model

1200LE

Terminal Server OS

Microsoft Windows Server 2003

Networks used

Telstra private IP network

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