More momentum for local authorities

City of Corona adds WVD and Citrix Analytics

More than two years in, the city's IT team continues on the road toward the future of work with Citrix and Microsoft technologies

Over the last several years, the City of Corona IT team has automated manual processes, enhanced security, and espoused Microsoft Azure cloud technology. The city also has disassociated traditional hardware from the computing equation and enabled remote workers with intelligent tools. Citrix and Microsoft technology have been at the heart of these initiatives.

Now, there's even more to talk about. The team has tackled two more projects: the first, alleviating many endpoint devices in favor of using Windows Virtual Desktops (WVD) and Citrix in Azure, and the second, capitalizing on Citrix Analytics, a component of Citrix Workspace, to get actionable information about the performance and security of the digital environment.

From Microsoft Windows devices to WVD and Citrix

"We made the decision to go all in on Microsoft Azure to ultimately transition everything to the cloud," Kyle Edgeworth, Deputy CIO, explains. "Citrix was the logical choice to pair with the WVD platform on Azure.

"Citrix enhances the value of Windows Virtual Desktop. Enterprise tools in Citrix improve user density and performance, allow us to provision workloads on-demand, and simplify how our team manages images and applications," he continues. "Intelligent scaling tools, like Citrix AutoScale, help us keep our costs under control.

"We now have end-to-end monitoring capabilities, too," he adds. "The best part is that we've been able to move away from Windows endpoints to low-cost, high-performance thin clients and still continue to deliver a great employee experience to our workforce."

Industry
Public Sector

Location
USA

Citrix products
- Citrix Workspace
- Citrix Analytics

Key Benefits
- Citrix Workspace drives digital transformation with an intelligent digital workspace platform
- Citrix Analytics for Security Proactively detects and prevent insider threats with user behavior analytics
- Citrix Analytics for Performance Uses machine learning to improve user experience and uncover the health of your environment

From Windows devices to WVD and Citrix

Moving desktop infrastructure to the cloud is a project that has spanned a period of two and a half years. The strong long-standing partnership between Microsoft and Citrix has made it easy for Citrix and Microsoft experts to help the city's IT team understand the capabilities the integrated technology delivers. By January of this year, nearly 50 users were using the new desktop infrastructure all the time.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, however, the IT team was forced to transition the lion's share of the workforce to working from home. The new desktop infrastructure made that switch easier.

Now, the "new normal" is that the IT team is managing a "hybrid phase" in which some employees are coming back to work and some are still at home. Edgeworth clarifies one crucial point, "For us, the goal has been the same throughout the projects and detours: transitioning almost all of our on-premises desktops to the cloud and delivering an experience that feels as natural as the on-premises one did," Edgeworth says.

"A big part of the initiative is that we're trying to change mindsets: we want the City of Corona workforce to understand that Citrix is the desktop to use 100 percent of the time, regardless of where staff members are working. It delivers a great employee experience and is agile enough to accommodate remote work." The IT team is not only using internal marketing and campaigning to tout the benefits of Citrix Workspace to city leaders and employees, but also, it is providing tutorials to users.

How Citrix Analytics fits

As the city made this transition, some staff members worried that performance in the new environment would not be as good as it had been in the old. That's where a second solution, Citrix Analytics for Performance, made a big difference.

"We've used actionable data from Citrix Analytics to counter negative user perceptions by sharing facts – actual numbers – that prove how we've improved performance over time," Edgeworth notes. "Just in the last month, for example, we've improved performance substantially by making some modifications on our site, and by taking advantage of some Citrix improvements. The Citrix Analytics data highlights that unequivocally. Having Citrix Analytics in our arsenal has delivered real value for us," he concludes.

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Kyle Edgeworth
Deputy CIO
City of Corona

Easy to set up and use

Edgeworth and his team were especially pleased with how easy it was to implement Citrix Analytics. "The easiest part of all was setting up Citrix Analytics," he says enthusiastically. "It was just click, click, connect. We loved the simplicity of it."

From there, the team worked to understand the kinds of valuable and actionable information they would find in the data. "I wanted to see how many people were using on-premises StoreFronts, for example," Edgeworth says. "Many first responders must use Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) encryption. That's a special use case and we needed to ensure that users were following the correct protocols. With Citrix Analytics, I was able to see that crucial information and make determinations on an individual basis."

Using Citrix Analytics for Performance to find and identify issues

Citrix Analytics for Performance also has enabled the IT team to identify user issues. "We've had users call in and say that they can't get a particular app to work, for example. They might identify an issue such as audio problems," he notes. "We can actually look at the data in Citrix Analytics and determine whether the individuals are using an older version of the Workspace app, a scenario that could cause this problem. We can then suggest an upgrade. This is really valuable to us."

Easier management of the new desktop environment

Now, management of the environment is much easier, too. "We have single pane of glass visibility into our desktops in the cloud, so management is simple," states Edgeworth. "Thanks to the data, we're able to show that the endpoint has become very reliable for our users. Additionally, the team can point to the number of issues that we've had over time – the number of connections issues, the user experience and so on, and actually show trending that proves our better performance over time.

"We're much more able to solve more problems and provide factual information with these analytical capabilities," says Edgeworth.

Adding alerts: valuable security measures

Security always has been a top concern for the City of Corona, but now that so many more employees work remotely, it's even more top-of-mind. Citrix Analytics for Security is enabling the team to implement some simple security measures such as alerts that are transparent to users yet very valuable to administrators.

"Now, with the alerts we've implemented, we can see that some people still are logging in with Windows 7 devices, and those endpoints aren't compatible with our environment," explains Edgeworth. "These alerts not only make us aware of things of this sort that might cause frustration and issues for users, but also, they let us know that attempts to use an incompatible operating system can cause security risks," he says.

Using geofencing to make achieving user compliance easier

Geofencing – using GPS or RFID technology to build a virtual geographic boundary – is another capability that Citrix Analytics brings to the City of Corona. Geofencing can enable software to trigger a response when a mobile device enters or leaves a particular area. While the team had limited capabilities before, Citrix Analytics enables them to get more granular information. Edgeworth and the team also can export the data if needed.

"Geofencing allows us the ability to see and understand where our employees are being productive while highlighting areas of concern for our security staff to investigate," Edgeworth notes. "By using customer risk indicators inside of Citrix Analytics we can proactively and automatically react to potential threats in real-time."

The momentum keeps going

With these new capabilities, the City of Corona continues to embrace the future of work. With every day that passes, the IT team learns more about untapped features and functionality in its Citrix and Microsoft technology arsenal. Most important, the innovative spirit that is in the DNA of this team continues to drive momentum and creativity for this California local government entity.

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