Anoop Handa – CIO Fullerton India

Fullerton India enhances its employee productivity and efficiency with Citrix XenDesktop

Fullerton India is one of India's fastest growing NBFCs, offering a complete range of financial services including Working Capital and Business Loans for MSMEs, Home finance & Mortgage Loans, Two-wheeler Loans and Commercial Vehicle Finance, Personal Loans for a variety of needs, Rural Livelihood Advancement Loans, Rural Housing Finance and Rural Mortgage Loans among others.

With over 5500 employees, the company reaches out to the market through its 361 branches across 400 towns and cities and more than 20000 villages. Through this strong network, Fullerton India provides financial solutions to over a million customers.

Productivity and efficiency issues

Being a large, distributed organization, Fullerton India faced issues typically associated with a traditional desktop environment. Maintenance of physical desktops was becoming a major challenge, which in turn had an impact on employee productivity.

"Desktop maintenance was becoming more complex and expensive, and since we have a widespread network, it was making the situation much more complicated. The users were also giving feedback about slower response time of applications, and greater down time due to issues with older desktops. They were therefore losing out on their productive time. The help desk tickets for end point support were also very high," says Anoop Handa, CIO, Fullerton India.

He realized that the IT team had to act fast to enhance user satisfaction and at the same time improve their productivity and efficiency by providing effective end-point support.

The time was also ripe for Fullerton India to look for alternative options as its traditional desktops were nearing the end of their lifecycle. "This was also the time to look at what new technology innovations were happening within end-point computing," Handa says.

Taking the partnership ahead with XenDesktop

Fullerton India had a long-term relationship with Citrix as it had implemented server virtualization for Fullerton India in 2009. "It was, therefore, a very obvious choice for us to extend this relationship. We were sure that their expertise around their desktop offerings would be as good as their solutions on the server front," Handa informs.

However, the going was not easy, Handa shares. "Arriving at a favourable ROI was critical to win management confidence and thus took a longer time for deliberation. We had to demonstrate to the management how the company would benefit in the

long run by using a new technology like desktop virtualization. Translation of Technology offering and its linkages to the business value are very critical for such transformation initiatives," he says.

Although Fullerton India briefly did research on other virtualization vendors, it did the Proof of Concept (PoC) only with Citrix. Once it was decided to implement Citrix XenDesktop, the next step was to evaluate the capabilities of the implementation partner.

Fullerton India decided to go with Anunta Tech as it offered the technology on an innovative pay-per-use model.

"We also did a lot of RoI studies while evaluating Anunta. It had implemented the solution in-house and the numbers of end-points were also similar to what we had in mind. Our assessment of Anunta was that it could be the single point of contact for us. They also assured us of providing a PoC, which helped us and matched our expectations," says Handa.

Before rolling out Citrix XenDesktop, Fullerton India chose a PoC for three months to test the solution. They initially covered 40 users to test the diversity across branches, functions, devices, network, hardware and software. These test users were spread over different environments across locations -- ADLS, MPLS, low bandwidth, high bandwidth. "We also took into account how many kinds of peripherals /devices (printers, scanners, etc.) were being used in our branches," Handa says.

After being assured of the tests, Fullerton India decided to roll out the technology in phases with the aim of completing the project by March 2014. Currently, the first phase is being implemented and would cover 700 desktops and would be completed by October 2013. Now that the foundation has been laid, Fullerton India expects the second phase to be completed much faster (the target is February 2014) by which time it will replace another 1500 desktops.

On a stable growth foundation

Post the implementation of Citrix XenDesktop, the maintenance and manageability of desktops have vastly improved. Since virtual desktops provide centralized management, it gives IT administrators the ability to easily manage thousands of PCs as a single unit by allowing them to deploy a one golden image to thousands of PCs, regardless of hardware or vendor type.

"The results have been tremendous as the number of help desk tickets concerning end-points are expected to reduce by 30 percent," says Handa.

Citrix XenDesktop has also enabled faster booting time of desktops, which earlier used to run into minutes. This has directly improved productivity and efficiency of users. Another factor that has led to increased productivity and efficiency is the ability of the users to access their desktops from any location.

"Citrix XenDesktop has given us the power of immediate recovery. If users are unable to access their desktops at any location due to planned/unplanned events (power shutdown, for instance), they can go to another branch and seamlessly log in and get access to their data that is available centrally," Handa said.

The solution has also led Fullerton India to achieve power savings of up to 70 percent. Another advantage of Citrix XenDesktop has been optimum allotment and utilization of storage.

"Companies today have a lot of storage that is unused. All PCs today come with 250 GB of storage. Multiply this by 2500 users and the resulting cost to the company is enormous. In a desktop virtualized environment, one could rationalize storage depending on the job role. On an average 10 GB is normally sufficient for a person to do his/her responsibilities.," explains Handa.

The path ahead

Going ahead, Fullerton India plans to explore Citrix's BYOD offering. "We have already started working with Citrix to explore and assess implementation of BYOD over time. When we have this kind of backend infrastructure, it makes sense to leverage it for mobility. It will then be a natural extension of this platform into BYOD," Handa informs.

I would not call this an IT project but would call it an 'IT enabled Transformation' project. This kind of a transformation touches each and every end-user of the company. Our users are so far very happy with the project, and that is the ultimate evidence of any successful initiative.