



Nottinghamshire Healthcare

Bringing a weak virtualized desktop environment back to life

After months of frustration and complaints about poor desktop performance from users, Nottinghamshire Healthcare asked Cutter to help it save its weak and ailing virtualized desktop infrastructure. Now, this vital IT platform is in the peak of good health, enabling the NHS trust to meet the needs of community-based clinicians and deliver a high quality of care for patients.

Challenges Faced

When Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust first decided to deploy a virtualized desktop infrastructure (VDI), it had high expectations. It aimed to make it possible for over 2,200 clinicians to connect quickly and securely to critical healthcare systems from computers or thin clients at up to 150 health centres and medical facilities throughout the county. However, the solution installed by the Trust's original IT partner soon led to disappointment.

“We discovered that the virtualization software and desktop images had not been optimised and, as a result, users experienced very slow desktop performance,” explains Andy Spencer, Systems Team Leader at Nottinghamshire Healthcare. “The virtual desktops were so sluggish that many professionals just didn't use them. Instead they travelled to other sites to access and update patient data, which was not at all productive.”

Cutter made all the difference by:



Optimising the existing infrastructure, to deliver faster desktop performance for users



Going 'above and beyond' to resolve issues that were actually outside of the original project scope



Demonstrating complete dedication to the success of the project



Recommending and arranging training, to enhance the skills of the in-house IT team

“I can honestly say that Cutter went above and beyond to make sure we were happy. The consultant worked tirelessly with complete dedication to our project. You don’t get that kind of service from everyone.”

Andy Spencer

Systems Team Leader, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Services Provided

Acting on the advice of an external contractor, Nottinghamshire Healthcare asked Cutter to provide recommendations for how to improve desktop performance. “The consultant from Cutter was brilliant – very, very technical but able to understand our business needs,” recalls Spencer. “It was clear from the very first meeting that he was the right person, with the right skills and the right attitude, to sort out our problems.”

Having already invested heavily in its VDI, Nottinghamshire Healthcare had no capital for additional hardware, so Cutter had to make best use of the existing environment and equipment, as Spencer explains. “Cutter began by thoroughly load testing the installed hardware to check what it was capable of and then re-designed the software layer to optimise the hardware. This approach gave us complete confidence in the end solution.”

One of the first things that Cutter identified was a lack of thin client knowledge within the IT team, so it arranged for key members of staff to attend a training course. “That was crucial to our success,” says Spencer. “We quickly learned how to automate many of the processes around deploying desktops, and that has saved us no end of time.”

Cutter completed the project in fewer days than anticipated, so assisted the Trust with other IT issues, including a persistent problem with local printing “Printing wasn’t in the original project scope, but Cutter sorted it out for us,” Spencer claims. “I can honestly say that Cutter went above and beyond to make sure we were happy. The consultant worked tirelessly with complete dedication to our project. You don’t get that kind of service from everyone.”

Results Achieved

Now, Nottinghamshire Healthcare has the high-performance, stable VDI that it originally wanted. “Cutter achieved far more with what we had than our previous IT partner did,” says Spencer. “We are now getting the best possible value from our original investment in IT and achieving our virtualization goals.”

The newly optimised VDI environment gives clinicians an exceptionally fast desktop experience, from any location, and usage is constantly increasing. The virtual desktops have been particularly successful at campus sites, such as Arnold Lodge, the Trust’s medium secure unit in Leicester. There are 100 virtual desktops at this facility for patients with mental illness and personality disorders, which enable doctors, nurses and other clinicians to access patient information.

Most importantly, the improvements to the VDI are helping Nottinghamshire Healthcare to deliver a high quality of service for patients. For example, physiotherapists working in health centres in the community can access back-office services to check and update patient records. “When Cutter had finished, our VDI worked as well as we could have ever hoped,” Spencer says.

Spencer and his colleagues in the IT department no longer have to waste a huge amount of time every day responding to issues in the VDI or addressing user concerns about the stability and performance of the environment. With no small amount of relief, he says, “We spend very little time worrying about our VDI now. It does exactly what we want it to do.”