

Microsoft® SoftGrid® Application Virtualization

Microsoft®
Desktop Optimization Pack
for Software Assurance

Case Study: Fontys Hogescholen

Provide instant, flexible application access to widely distributed user base, while improving total cost of ownership



THE CHALLENGE:

Centrally manage 350 applications for 9,200 workstations and laptops while accelerating deployments, improving availability, extending service levels, and improving TCO.

THE SOLUTION:

Implement Microsoft SoftGrid Application Virtualization.

THE RESULTS:

- Spend approximately 390,000 Euros (U.S. \$521,586) less per year on desktop TCO
- Roll out new applications and upgrades in just hours instead of 3–4 weeks
- Enabled applications to be available anywhere, anytime
- Eliminated application installations/de-installations and conflicts
- Enabled secure, centralized and flexible infrastructure
- Dramatically improved service levels and eliminated 99% of the 250 application-related helpdesk calls previously received every month
- Simple, small and stable server farm



Company overview:

Fontys University of Professional Education, the largest college in the Netherlands, was established in 1996 through the merger of five higher education institutes. Its mission is to be a dynamic source of knowledge, development, innovation and inspiration. It offers over 200 practice-oriented bachelor's and master's level programs at over 40 separate schools.

Challenges

Fontys administration wanted IT services to follow their strategic vision of a “learning community,” which would include anytime, anywhere education, flexibility of their institutions to choose the type of applications and IT services required, and delivery of applications independent of time, place, location and platform. This was quite a challenge for Fontys IT, which services more than 60,000 user accounts, including 37,000 students and 4,500 employees, who access 1,200 applications every day via 8,000 Fontys workstations, 1,200 Fontys laptops and 10,000 personal laptops owned by the students.

1. **Decentralized, inflexible infrastructure:** Although Fontys had a central IT department that provided basic services to many of its locations, the infrastructure itself was largely decentralized and much end-user support was done at the local sites. This resulted in redundant services and time-consuming end-user support. In a large organisation like Fontys, where the needs of educational programs and, therefore, its users are constantly changing, a decentralized infrastructure made it difficult to respond quickly and adequately. Too often, the organisation's goals were hampered by IT's technical limitations. They needed a more adaptive, cost-effective infrastructure that would support business innovations.
2. **Anytime, anywhere application availability:** Students need to be able to access their applications from anywhere, in the classrooms, on any public campus, or off-site. Fontys wanted to ensure that they, and their professors, could access applications independently from their workplaces—as easily as electricity. They wanted applications to be available without installation so that, for example, students could congregate to take an ad-hoc lesson in AutoCad and, within 30 seconds,

be able to start AutoCad, even though it wasn't previously on the local clients. This would require a much more flexible system that would bind the applications to authorized users instead of to machines, enabling full roaming.

- 3. Labor-intensive maintenance:** Because all applications had to be installed on client machines—whether in server-based or desktop environments—Fontys IT spent many hours testing new and updated applications against their standard image to ensure they would not conflict. Not only did this result in an expanding server farm that was costly and time-consuming to maintain, it made it extremely difficult to quickly roll-out applications and provide the instant availability users required.
- 4. Supporting graphic-intensive applications:** Many of the critical applications Fontys students and faculty require are multimedia and graphic-intensive. These applications could not run in Fontys' server-based computing environment, and required much IT staff time to deploy and support.

Fontys needed a fully centralized solution that would enable them to maintain control and ensure system security, while providing users instant, anywhere availability for any and all applications, and flexibility and freedom for the institutions they support. Their reseller, PQR, recommended a SoftGrid-based infrastructure for both direct-to-desktop and Citrix server-based computing.

The Microsoft SoftGrid Application Virtualization Solution

Microsoft SoftGrid Application Virtualization transforms applications into virtualized, network-available services, resulting in dynamic delivery of software that is never installed, never conflicts, and minimizes costly application compatibility testing. Users and their application environments are no longer machine-specific, and the machines themselves are no longer user-specific, enabling IT to be flexible and responsive to business needs, and significantly reducing the cost of PC management.

SoftGrid's unique ability to virtualize all key components of any Windows application allows administrators to accelerate each step of the application management process by compressing the time necessary for packaging and preparing applications, deployment, patch management and updates, support and termination. Users automatically receive the latest application version the next time they log on to the network.

The virtualization of applications happens with the SoftGrid Sequencer, a wizard-based tool that packages Windows application for real-time streaming as network services. The Sequencer uses a once-per-application process to protect the application's integrity and does not modify its source code.

SoftGrid is an integral tool in the Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack, a dynamic desktop solution that helps reduce application deployment costs, enable delivery of applications as services and better manage and control enterprise desktop environments.

"SoftGrid has played a critical role in making 'Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere' applications a reality. Our users have maximum freedom in the way they work, and our IT environment is extremely flexible, manageable and secure."

RENS VAN DER VORST
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER,
FONTYS HOGESCHOLEN

The Results

The combination of Microsoft SoftGrid Application Virtualization and Microsoft SoftGrid Application Virtualization for Terminal Services enables Fontys to give users on demand access to applications in a much faster way. By using the application virtualization technology, applications are no longer installed on the Terminal Servers of workplaces or on desktops.

According to Rens Van der Vorst, CTO for Fontys, “The SoftGrid business case that we sold to the Fontys organisation was that we would be able to enhance desktop use and flexibility, realize anywhere, anytime working, and achieve full application roaming without installations—and all with a lower total cost of ownership. SoftGrid has enabled us to spend approximately 390.000 Euros (U.S. \$521,586) less per year on TCO while reaching these goals.”

SoftGrid offers Fontys the following advantages:

- **Applications are made available upon user demand** without installation, regression testing or reimaging. To date, Fontys has virtualized 350 applications (175 applications via server-based computing and 175 direct to the desktop). Even graphic-intensive applications that previously would not run in a centralized, server-based environment are now easily supported in a centralized infrastructure. Both desktops and Terminal Servers have only a very basic image (i.e., the operating system and Microsoft Office). This enables applications and updates to be deployed within a couple of hours. Before SoftGrid it took 3–4 weeks for department-wide deployments—of which time approximately 30–40% was spent resolving application conflict problems—and up to a year for college-wide deployment projects.
- **SoftGrid virtualized applications operate without any conflicts or problems**, regardless of other applications that may be running, or even installed, on the same computer.
- **Applications are available anytime, anywhere** throughout the network, on any speed connection—or even without a network connection. Availability of applications is no longer dependent on the client device.
- **Centralized management** makes it easy and fast to implement any changes, providing users instant access to the latest applications. In addition, Fontys manages application usage and license management centrally, giving IT much greater control.
- **Dramatically improved and extended service levels.** Fontys IT doesn’t have to spend any time manually troubleshooting application issues and can quickly resolve any client problems. In the case of a failed computer, rather than reinstalling the affected user’s application set, they can refresh them from the IT console and, based on the users’ credentials, they’ll automatically get immediate access to a fresh application set. SoftGrid also reduces the number of problems end users experience with their desktops and the number of calls the helpdesk receives, since applications no longer affect one another or the host operating system. Van der Vorst estimates that, prior to SoftGrid, the helpdesk received approximately 250 calls per month about problems related to post-deployment conflicts. Now they receive only about 1–2% of those calls. “There are really no reliability issues with SoftGrid-enabled applications. We don’t get any of those helpdesk calls anymore,” said Van der Vorst.

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reduction in
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- **Simpler, smaller and much more stable server farms** are possible because more applications can run on a single server. In addition, since only the basic image is installed, the servers are kept very clean, resulting in optimal performance and less maintenance, and eliminating the need for application load managed groups or application silos. Server provisioning became very easy: it takes less than one hour before a new server is completely deployed and available.
- **IT supports organization growth** and innovation by providing an extremely flexible infrastructure that can adapt immediately to evolving business needs.

See For Yourself

To learn how Microsoft SoftGrid Application Virtualization and the Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack for Software Assurance can help you and for complete systems requirements, visit: www.windowstv.com/optimizeddesktop.



390K
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