

Parallels® VDI solution

Customer Success Story

Overview

Far Northern Regional Center is a health and human services provider for the State of California in nine of the most rural counties in Northern California that extend to the Oregon and Nevada borders. Although funded by the State of California, FNRC is a separate entity. The mission of FNRC is to provide services and support which allow persons with developmental disabilities to live productive and valued lives.

Due to economic conditions, the State of California has significantly cut FNRC's budget, with additional budget cuts pending. FNRC tried Terminal Services from Microsoft but was completely dissatisfied with the high maintenance of the solution as well as the ability of a single Word error to crash the entire environment.

There were a number of challenges that faced FNRC when investigating desktop virtualization. These included:

- Staff acceptance of intermittent latency due to variability of internet traffic/DSL performance in remote locations. This challenge was mitigated with the introduction of Provision Networks client.
- Wide variety of custom applications provided by the State of California written for 32-bit platforms that are difficult to template
- Compliance with the State of California's requirement that all agency data transferred to removable storage be encrypted. Software used in their application was designed to be in physical PC's with removable media not in a virtual desktop that creates virtual channels back to the PC.

Configuration

FNRC had multiple data centers and lots of backup issues. Six out of the 8 regional offices did not have backup staff so social workers, secretaries or other staff performed backups. Maintenance was extensive with up to 1,200 miles per year driven to each of the regional offices.

Results

Because budgets are so tight, FNRC has combined Parallels VDI with free operating system elements allowing them to disable the hard drives in the machines and eliminate the need for virus scan licenses and other security software at the desktop. PC maintenance has decreased by 95% and is limited to replacing failed fans and power supplies. FNRC has downsized to two data centers in 12 months and expects to reduce to a single data center within the next year, eliminating their backup problems. "I have not driven a single mile for maintenance in the past 18 months," says Thomas. "These trips meant nights away from the kids, required up to 5 hours of driving one way and many times I did not have the right part." FNRC has been able to repurpose 10 year-old PCs with Parallels VDI. "We turn off the OS and hard drives. When the user logs in, they are directed to the appropriate VDI server, get logged in, and the Parallels VDI Windows XP skin is applied to the virtual desktop. They run just like new machines. PC support calls have all but disappeared," says Thomas.



Far Northern Regional Center:

- **Industry:** Health & Human Services
- **Offices:** 8 physical offices ranging in staff members from 1 to 125

"With Parallels VDI, IT has found that we can perform functions that we did not have time to do in the past."

— Ivor Thomas,
Analyst

In spite of severe budget cuts, FNRC has been able to experience significant cost savings. A typical PC costs \$999. Repurposing the PC with a Parallels license brings that down to \$265 for a cost savings of \$734 in the same fiscal year. FNRC is currently deploying 50 users/desktops per Parallels server to stay conservative. "A year into the project, I found that the total cost per user, including server hardware, Microsoft and Parallels licensing and platinum support totaled \$265 for the 1st year. \$51.90 per user per year assuming continuous platinum support contracts with Parallels and a 4-year depreciation schedule on the server hardware itself." FNRC will eventually need to purchase thin clients as repurposed PC's fail. A thin client costs \$350 per unit and can be depreciated over 10 years instead of 4-5 years. "Energy savings of a thin client over a PC averaged \$60 per station per year calculated in 2007, says Thomas. That's represents some real savings."

FNRC has found that with Parallels VDI they have been able to repurpose people – not eliminate. "We have found that IT can now perform functions that we did not handle in the past," says Thomas. "When we are fully VDI, we estimate a reduction from 5 to 3 people to support our IT infrastructure, as we know it now, by eliminating 95% of workstation maintenance."

FNRC is 55% virtual today with the goal of reaching 75-80% in the next twelve months depending on California budgets. FNRC currently runs two Parallels virtual servers for 100 people, 50 on one VM and 40 on a second VM, with a virtualized terminal server handling 15 people per day. FNRC will grow to a total of 5 servers with 1 server acting as a standby node in an active/passive cluster.

Some problems still remain but these primarily come from the applications FNRC is required to support for the State of California. FNRC has found that by rewrapping applications that do not support 64-bit from the State of California they have been able to maintain the integrity of their templates.

"When you compare today to what we did with all the PC support and maintenance, Parallels VDI has reduced our workloads by 90%," says Thomas. "In reality, we were getting to a point where there were so many security patches and stability updates from Microsoft and other security vendors that the desktop issues were financially unsustainable. Parallels eliminated all unsustainable factors and the users really, really like it."



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