



SUCCESS STORY:

CITY OF CORONA, CALIFORNIA

California City Blazes Trails in Move to Cloud Workspaces

Global COVID-19 pandemic accelerates transition that began in preparation for the company's headquarters relocation.



Photo courtesy of City of Corona



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of our employees did not understand the ability to work from home. This has become the biggest game-changer for our organization since adopting IGEL, Citrix and Microsoft. The flexibility afforded by the cloud workspace solution has enabled us to keep operating—and in some cases has saved jobs.”

CHRIS MCMASTERS

CIO, City of Corona

SUMMARY

The Challenge

- Traditionally, government agencies have not been quick to adopt cloud solutions due to cost and security concerns – making it a hard-sell for decision makers.
- On-premises solutions were becoming a liability due to increasing frequency and proximity of California wildfires and the ongoing threat of major earthquakes.
- On-premises desktop infrastructure did not provide the desired scalability and were becoming increasingly difficult to manage.

The Solution

- IGEL OS
- IGEL UD Pocket
- Microsoft Windows Virtual Desktop (WVD) hosted in Azure Government
 - with FSLogix for personalization
- Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops
- ThinPrint hosted printing

Key Benefits

- Ease of management
- OpEx savings
- Reduced energy costs
- Improved endpoint security
- Quickly mobilized workforces
- Improved business continuity

In 2018, Chris McMasters, CIO, and Kyle Edgeworth, Deputy CIO for City of Corona, CA, began looking for a better way to support business continuity for the city's desktop computing infrastructure. "We were both away at a conference when a fire broke out in the city," said McMasters. "We had to open an emergency operations center remotely, and work things over the phone from a distance until we could get back to the city. It really didn't work all that well, and we started thinking about what we could accomplish with a move to the cloud and the adoption of cloud workspaces."

Both McMasters and Edgeworth came to City of Corona from the private sector, where generally cloud is used much more freely than it is in the public sector. "We were limited at first as we had to operate in the government cloud leveraging Azure - today there are more options," added McMasters. "After looking at a number of cloud desktop infrastructure solutions, we landed on what is now Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops."

It was a bit of a hard-sell at first for McMasters and Edgeworth. "We had to go to the city council and ask for the money to invest in cloud workspaces," said Edgeworth. "We had to do a lot of due diligence in demonstrating how it would improve resource allocation, save costs and reduce power consumption. In the end, we were able to make the case that it was both an economic and strategic decision, one which really paid off when the COVID-19 pandemic hit."

A FAMILIAR, YET IMPROVED WINDOWS EXPERIENCE

In migrating to the cloud, it was very important to McMasters and Edgeworth that they provide users with the Windows experience they were familiar with. The combination of Citrix and Microsoft Windows Virtual Desktop (WVD) helped them to achieve that. They also wanted to improve the ease of managing their endpoints.

"To support scalability and reduce the strain on our IT staff and helpdesk, we were moving toward a thin client solution," said Edgeworth. "We landed on IGEL for several reasons. First of all, with IGEL OS we were able to repurpose existing hardware, which helped save costs. Next, the desktops were easy to set up and deploy. Finally, the security of the solution was a huge selling point."

Edgeworth added, "No longer were we wiping devices when employees left or moved on to different responsibilities. With IGEL UD Pocket, users plug in the device, access their Citrix Workspace, and when they are done, simply unplug and the device returns to its previous state without retaining any of the user's data or applications."

Along with an improved end user computing experience, Edgeworth and McMasters were also focused on developing a better Windows experience in the cloud. Printing had been challenging from a remote perspective. "At Microsoft Ignite, we were able to meet with the ThinPrint team and they showed us how with IGEL and Microsoft Windows Virtual Desktop, we could remove the barriers of remote printing with their hosted printing solution," said McMasters. "The platform was simple to set up and within minutes we had their print servers up and running. We didn't have to worry about drivers or re-direction, and it all connected to Azure through the Microsoft WVD services."

PANDEMIC SPURS QUICK ACTION AND IGEL AND CITRIX DELIVER

In March 2020, when it became clear that drastic action was needed at the government level to contain the spread of COVID-19, City of Corona sent their employees home to work in compliance with California's safer-at-home mandate.

“We had to work quickly to bring our emergency operations center online,” said McMasters. “We don’t do this very often and the IGEL UD Pocket and Citrix afforded us greater flexibility in spinning up virtual desktops on our older machines. The day after the state emergency was declared, five members from our IT team spent hours updating our Emergency Operations Center computers to get them ready for use. After a couple hours the idea came from the team to use IGEL UD Pockets instead. The UD Pocket made things go a lot faster than manually updating the endpoints, patching and installing the necessary applications. All we had to do was plug in the UD Pocket, turn on the computer, boot it up and Windows 10 was accessible from IGEL OS within minutes, with everything the end-user needed to be productive.”

END-USERS APPRECIATE SPEED AND PERFORMANCE WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

McMasters and Edgeworth report that since the pandemic began, most of the end-users at City of Corona have been pleasantly surprised by how fast their machines are. “They liken it to the speed at which they are able to work while in the office,” said Edgeworth. “Sometimes when working from home, the Internet is slow, or the computer isn’t as snappy as they are used to at work. IGEL eliminates those bottlenecks and makes the desktop easy to deploy and use, even for our less tech savvy employees.”

McMasters reports that in some cases, they’ve even heard that performance is better at home than in the office. “Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of our employees did not understand the ability to work from home. That has become the biggest game-changer for our organization since adopting IGEL, Citrix and Microsoft. The flexibility afforded by the cloud workspace solution has enabled us to save jobs,” he added.

City of Corona employees have also reported being happier due to the flexibility of working from home in the cloud. “In addition to preventing furloughs and lay-offs, we’ve kept all essential city services operational, while at the same time keeping workers safe and healthy during the pandemic. Like many of us, they too have been dealing with caring for children and other family members at home. By giving them 24/7 access to their cloud desktops, they can adjust their work schedules to accommodate their families and other responsibilities, while still being productive and adding value.”

McMasters and Edgeworth are confident that once things return to normal, the use of IGEL, Citrix, and Microsoft will make the transition back to the office, or out of the office again should another emergency hit, practically seamless. “With these technologies in place it won’t take much to move back and forth as needed,” McMasters concluded.

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