

# City of Wisconsin Rapids Case Study

## Wisconsin Rapids, WI

### CASE STUDY

*The City of Wisconsin Rapids falls head over heels for desktop virtualization and thin-client computing.*

Thin, uncomplicated, reliable and secure. Suitable for a long-term relationship.

Sure, that sounds like a personal ad, but it's also a fairly accurate description of desktop virtualization and thin-client computing. The City of Wisconsin Rapids has fallen in love with these technologies thanks to their ability to cut costs, conserve energy, boost security and relieve administrative headaches.

RMM Solutions played the role of matchmaker. When the City's Information Systems Specialist, Jason DeMarco, was looking for a way to reduce spending on PCs, RMM Solutions introduced him to desktop virtualization.

"I was looking at our computer replacement budget and realized that we were spending \$1,000 or more for PCs that were used only for Office and browsing the Internet," DeMarco. "I started looking into virtualization and bouncing some ideas off the engineers at RMM. In the end, RMM helped us implement desktop virtualization and replace 55 PCs with thin clients."

### Thin Is In

By addressing some of the most troublesome problems facing IT — desktop administration, data security and technology refresh costs — thin-client computing is gaining more and more admirers. A thin client has its own memory, processor and network connectivity but no hard disk drive — nor any of the baggage that goes with it. What's more, thin clients cost less, are more reliable and require less-frequent upgrades than PCs.

Thin clients also use a fraction of the power that a desktop PC consumes. The thin clients the City purchased use less than 20 watts of power, while even newer PCs consume more than 100 watts. Focus on Energy estimates that a business can save more than \$32 annually for every PC it replaces.

"The replacement cost for a thin client is about \$200 or \$300 — much less than a standard PC,"



DeMarco said. "Over time, I expect to see large savings in hardware costs. We should also be able to calculate significant energy savings."

"Interface" pretty much describes a thin client's function. In essence, a thin client accepts the user's keystrokes and mouse movements and sends them to the application, then displays the application's video output. That doesn't mean they look anything like the old "dumb" terminals of the mainframe environment. The leading thin-client solutions offer a robust end-user experience suited to today's graphics-intensive applications, and an array of options to meet a variety of end-user and application requirements.

### What a Pair

That makes thin clients the ideal partners for desktop virtualization solutions, in which the desktop environment, applications and data reside on a centralized server within the data center. With desktop virtualization, IT is freed from the tasks of patching operating systems, installing and updating applications, and ensuring that data is protected on each and every desktop.

"The time savings is a huge thing for me because I'm a one-man IT department. If I need to update an existing application or roll out a new one, I do it once and it's automatically pushed out to all the users," DeMarco said.

Desktop virtualization improves security because data is stored on the server where it is backed up



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and secured. DeMarco says desktop virtualization also makes it easy to control which users have access to certain applications.

“Using Active Directory, I’m able to push an application out to specific groups,” he said. “I can have more than one person logging in to the same virtual machine and yet only certain people would see a particular application.”

### Changing Partners

Thin clients aren’t right for everyone. They’re not sufficient for power users who need to do a lot of local processing with applications, for example.

“In places like the engineering department where they use CAD and more powerful programs, we didn’t bother touching their PCs. If people had specific needs such as burning a lot of CDs or DVDs, we left their workstations alone as well,” DeMarco said. “We didn’t replace laptops with thin clients, although we may consider it in the future because VMware enables you to connect to a desktop over the Internet. It’s not quite as crucial to have a laptop with a VPN connection to access all your programs.”

Those well-suited for thin-client computing find the transition to be virtually transparent. Desktop virtualization technology creates an environment identical to a Windows PC that can be customized to re-create a particular user’s desktop experience.

“I needed the ability to make it a smooth transition for the end-users because people don’t like change. That was one of the things that drew me to VMware,” DeMarco said. “It’s not just icons on the screen — it works exactly the way a regular PC works.”

### Long-Term Relationship

The City of Wisconsin Rapids has had a long-term relationship with RMM Solutions. The City relies upon RMM for sound technical advice and assistance with special projects.

“The RMM team is really good about helping me figure out exactly what I need and then handling the actual implementation. It’s always a

***“The RMM team is really good about helping me figure out exactly what I need...it’s always a smooth project when I have them working for me.”***

very smooth project when I have them working for me,” DeMarco said.

For this particular project, the City appreciated RMM’s extensive expertise in virtualization solutions. RMM engineers implemented the VMware desktop virtualization product and showed DeMarco how to administer the system, which made it very easy when it came time to actually deploy the thin clients.

“Today’s organizations are challenged with shrinking budgets, rising energy costs and the growing complexities of technology. Our focus is to work with our clients to implement virtualization technology to increase efficiencies and save energy, thereby reducing on-going costs and increasing security,” said Rimon Moses, Chief Executive Officer of RMM Solutions.

RMM also helped DeMarco boost the productivity of his servers through virtualization.

“I originally had ordered three servers, and RMM showed me how I could use one of them to start virtualizing some of our other servers,” he said. “We were able to create a new file-share server that’s connected to our SAN and virtualized a domain controller and application server. I was able to create five servers on one physical piece of hardware. You save a lot of money and you better utilize the server processor and the RAM.”

Like many organizations, the City of Wisconsin Rapids needed to control costs, improve security, reduce energy consumption and streamline desktop management. With help from RMM Solutions, the City found that desktop virtualization and thin-client computing are a match made in heaven.



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