

Case Study

Menzies Distribution
Logistics
IT Services

Ricoh and Microsoft help
UK distribution business
improve customer service,
productivity

1st UK FTSE to deploy Windows 8.1



Despite a growing and expanding business, Menzies Distribution's ability to deliver first-class customer service was under threat from an aging and underperforming desktop environment. But its partnership with Ricoh

and Microsoft and deployment of one of the UK's first Windows 8.1 solutions has transformed productivity and delivered a more efficient, reliable and advanced desktop platform.

Executive summary

Name: Menzies Distribution
Location: Edinburgh, Scotland
Size: 2,000 staff
Activity: Logistics

Challenges

- Maintain a high level of customer service
- Support business growth and expansion
- Aging, underperforming desktop environment

Solution

- Ricoh IT infrastructure management
- Desktop transformation based on Windows 8.1
- End user management

Benefits

- Improves staff and business productivity with a new flexible, agile desktop infrastructure
- Faster, more efficient hardware
- Helps improve time to respond to customer service calls
- Streamlines data centre operations - servers cut from 132 to 20
- Achieves first deployment of Windows 8.1 for a UK FTSE business
- Strategic Ricoh-Microsoft partnership

Challenges

From its beginning in 1833 as a one-person shop in Edinburgh, Menzies Distribution has become the only national newspaper and magazine distributor in the UK. It has 29,500 retail customers, ranging from independent shops in towns, cities and remote villages, to all the major supermarket chains. Known within Menzies as the 'nightly miracle', the company distributes some 6.7 million newspapers and magazines, 364 days a year, throughout the UK and Ireland.

To grow its business, Menzies is expanding the type of services offered through acquisition and leveraging its existing distribution network to offer complementary services such as parcel and goods delivery, cargo handling and travel brochure distribution.

Essential to business development is maintaining Menzies' high level of customer service. But this was under threat from a desktop environment that was nine years old, based on the end-of-life Microsoft XP operating system and using outdated hardware. Issues such as compatibility, performance and security were increasingly problematical. Staff regarded PCs as one of Menzies' worst facilities. For example, customer service representatives had PCs that were taking up to 15 minutes to boot up and were slow to access key customer information. There was the equivalent of one complete PC failure every day of the year.

Menzies approached five suppliers and asked them to recommend what they thought the business needed, from a like-for-like replacement, through to a full cloud-based solution. The final two proposals were a choice between a complete cloud-based solution and a hybrid one offered by Ricoh, which balanced the innovation and benefits of cloud technology with traditional, more risk-averse data centre applications and services.



Marshall says, "Menzies is a 24/7 business with the critical 'nightly miracle' operation of distributing millions of newspapers around the UK. If our IT systems go down and we can't deliver newspapers then we are out of business. Throughout the challenging tendering process, Ricoh showed it had a full understanding of our business. Also, Menzies uses Gartner for procurement advice and what Gartner says about Ricoh IT Services was instrumental in the decision."

Another key factor in awarding the contract to Ricoh was Ricoh's relationship with Microsoft as a Microsoft Gold Partner. Marshall says, "We were keen to go for leading edge technology. Ricoh's ability to work closely with Microsoft was critical. It opened doors to more information, advice and ultimately, led to a much better deal."

Solution

Menzies had initially looked at Windows 7, but on Ricoh's recommendation, decided on a more advanced, future-proofed Windows 8.1 solution. User feedback from a head office and branch site pilot was very positive and showed Windows 8.1 integrated easily with existing applications.

"Ricoh put together a team to help manage change and the whole transition process from procurement and pilot to implementation, deployment, communication and training. And Ricoh continues to support us throughout the five-year life cycle of the desktop project. Ricoh project managed deployment and we've not had one single complaint or query from anyone across the business. I think that is hugely significant for our confidence in the operating system, and specifically for Ricoh's service and expertise," says Marshall.

The Ricoh IT infrastructure management solution - which took just three months - was a complete desktop environment replacement from PCs and servers, to software, data and application infrastructure. The OS upgrade made Menzies the first UK FTSE company to undertake an enterprise-wide implementation of Windows 8.1, which also included Microsoft's Hyper-V virtualisation technology and Windows Defender antimalware software. The server OS was also upgraded to Server 2012/R2, along with deployment of Microsoft Office 2013.

The project covered 1170 PCs across 53 UK sites, comprising: head office, hub and spoke warehouse and distribution locations and offices for other businesses in the group.

Benefits

For Menzies, the most significant benefit of the Ricoh solution is the way in which it improves performance and supports high-quality customer service. Productivity benefits

continued overleaf

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include faster and more efficient hardware so users and especially call centre staff are able to serve customers quickly. Menzies has a customer call response target of 35 seconds, which is now down to 23 seconds. The Windows 8.1 customisable Start menu was designed by Ricoh so that, for example, information resources needed by customer service staff are at their finger tips and can be accessed easily. Other softer benefits, such as better user satisfaction, also contribute to more productivity and a better working environment.

Server virtualisation has enabled Menzies to streamline resources and improve data centre performance, as well as reducing capital and operational costs. Servers have been cut from 132 to just 20, resulting in a smaller hardware footprint, which is easier to manage and greener because it reduces energy use. The antimalware features of Windows 8.1 have helped to improve security by providing additional protection against viruses and spyware.

"The new desktop environment which Ricoh has delivered is key to supporting business change and maintaining first-class customer service. It gives Menzies a desktop infrastructure which is flexible, scalable and agile and one where users can be more productive and efficient," says Marshall.

Menzies' staff now have a more reliable and easy-to-use desktop infrastructure. Business applications can be downloaded instantly in one or two clicks. While enterprise-wide data security has been improved, staff still have more flexibility, for example, to choose which web browser to use.

As well as Ricoh's knowledge and expertise, Marshall believes the desktop replacement project has been so successful because of the relationship with Ricoh. He says, "Ricoh is a Menzies partner, not a supplier. That partnership began several years ago with a Ricoh managed print solution. That proved so effective that the partnership has grown to include IT support, an audio-visual solution and now, the latest, business critical IT infrastructure solution."

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Ricoh desktop replacement services
- Windows 8.1
- Windows Server 2012 R2
- Hyper-V
- PC and server hardware and software

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Mark Marshall, Infrastructure Services Group, Senior Analyst, Menzies Distribution

