

CNP ASSURANCES

With 24 million customers, 14 million of whom are in France, and a turnover of more than 32.6 billion euros, CNP Assurances is the leading provider of personal insurance in France. With more than 150 years' experience of risk management, CNP Assurances offers a wide range of savings, pension and risk insurance products tailored to the needs of its customers.



Extending continuity of service to individual workstations

As a leading financial institution, CNP Assurances needed to implement a disaster recovery plan (DRP) to preserve the integrity of its customers' data and to guarantee continuity of service for its IT systems. To this end CNP Assurances acquired a backup site in Rennes, ready to take over the activity of the main site in Angers in the event of a major incident.

However for CNP Assurances, continuity of service is not limited to the data centre, it also includes a DRP for users.

In order to implement the user DRP, CNP Assurances decided to virtualise its workstations.

The aim

To extend continuity of service to individual workstations, allowing CNP Assurances to manage its insurance applications at all times and from any location.

The first stage will involve establishing a virtual environment for the 150 employees of its IT organisation.

"The availability of client systems is far from being a theoretical problem. Companies are regularly confronted with availability problems at client workstations," reports Jean-Paul Capdeville, head of engineering for infrastructure services at CNP Assurances.

The solution

Implementation of the NEC Virtual PC Center infrastructure

Expected benefits

- Continuity of service at an individual level as part of a user DRP
- Access to a personalised PC environment any time, anywhere
- Integration and maintenance without impact on the current organisation
- Improved performance
- Reduced costs: maintenance, electricity



A SOLUTION BASED ON CENTRALISATION, SIMPLIFICATION AND OPTIMISATION

"The maturity and reliability of the VPCC proposal from NEC provides an ideal platform for workstation virtualisation. We plan to extend this solution to all our core users and to external contributors." says Jean-Paul Capdeville, head of engineering for infrastructure services at CNP Assurances.

Searching for a complete solution and smooth integration

Having evaluated proposals from various manufacturers, CNP Assurance opted for the Virtual PC Center (VPCC) solution from NEC. This comprises four virtualisation servers, each capable of supporting up to 50 virtual clients, two management servers configured as a high-availability cluster, a SAN storage system, and a thin client for each user.

NEC took care of the entire implementation process, from planning to integration testing and installation.

"We quickly settled on NEC's proposal. We appreciated the stability and maturity of this simple solution that was compliant with standards, and the responsiveness of the NEC teams throughout the project," says Jean-Paul Capdeville, head of engineering for infrastructure services at CNP Assurances.

Details of the solution provided



- 150 NEC US110 clients
- 4 NEC Express5800/120Ri-2 virtualisation servers
- 2 NEC Express5800/120Ri-2 management servers in high availability mode (ExpressCluster)
- 1 NEC D3-10 + DEU storage array
- Integration in a NEC 42U rack

Multiple benefits for CNP Assurances

Continuity of service

IT personnel can access their virtual workstation at any time and from any location. They can either use the thin client installed in the office or connect to their workstation from outside via a virtual private network (VPN).

Security

The absence of any local storage system on the NEC thin client makes it impossible for data to be accessed without authorisation and guarantees that usage complies with the very strict security policy of CNP Assurances.

Performance

By removing all data exchange (except for the display and the keyboard/mouse interaction) to the servers and the SAN, VPCC streamlines network traffic and improves application performance. The improvements in performance were particularly noticeable with the migration of a large application that the Italian branch of CNP Assurances had previously run on a traditional PC.

Ease of administration

A single console is able to manage the virtualisation servers and the client configurations, making it easier to keep applications and security up to date. This approach is fully in line with the methods already used for remote IT management.

Reduced maintenance and electricity costs

Each NEC thin client uses 8 to 10 times less energy than a traditional PC. CNP Assurances expects to be able to reduce its energy bill by 50%. The absence of components such as a hard disk or fan also increases the reliability of the system and prolongs its service life by up to 6 years.

Outlook

Extremely satisfied with the solution's reliability and maturity, CNP Assurances now plans to extend the VPCC solution to other business applications used internally or by external service providers.

What is the benefit of virtualising workstations?

Virtualisation allows one system to do the work of many by sharing its resources across different environments.

The benefits associated with virtual workstations become all the more apparent when you consider that they do not affect the IT solutions already in place in an organisation (applications, databases). Virtualising workstations actually provides concrete solutions to the financial and regulatory problems that organisations have to deal with.

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