



Best Buy Canada Ringing Up Business Benefits with Rapid Application Deployment

Best Buy Canada, a wholly owned subsidiary of Best Buy Co. Inc., is the country's fastest-growing specialty retailer and e-tailer of consumer electronics. Best Buy Canada is headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia, and operates 32 Best Buy stores and 116 Future Shop stores. The company has 15,000 employees, including 230 permanent IT staff. With an aggressive growth strategy, Best Buy Canada is in the midst of a planned expansion across the country.

THE CHALLENGE: AN IT INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT BUSINESS GROWTH

When the first Best Buy Canada stores opened, they only had a UNIX®-based Point of Sale application. In 1998, company executives embarked on a two-year plan to develop several custom applications, including a retail management system, and deploy them along with database reporting tools, forms and productivity applications to all stores and warehouses.

But Best Buy Canada faced some hurdles: first, these client/server applications did not perform well across a WAN; and second, with an aggressive growth plan calling for opening about 25 new stores per year, it was clear that deployment on the local desktop would grow increasingly burdensome. The company recognized the need for a better solution to rapidly and efficiently deploy applications to existing and future locations in support of business growth and improved store management.

IMPLEMENTING A CITRIX SOLUTION FOR REMOTE CONNECTIVITY

Best Buy Canada decided to implement Citrix Presentation Server™ software with Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003. Currently, the company deploys 25 applications via Presentation Server to approximately 3,000 employees across 148 retail stores and warehouses. These employees are primarily store associates, managers, and warehouse staff, who access the applications — such as Retek Merchandising System, the Microsoft® Office Suite, and Oracle Forms — on thin-client devices and PCs. The company is also rolling out in-store kiosks that employees will use to connect to applications via the system, including the company intranet. In addition, Best Buy Canada permits its outside vendors to access selected applications by connecting to Citrix Presentation Server over the Internet.

“We’ve adopted the Citrix Access Platform as a corporate standard for employees at our 148 retail stores and warehouses who need to access critical applications remotely. Also, we can give outside vendors secure, controlled access via the system.”

ROY BRASSINGTON

Team Lead, LSIDS Store Systems,
Best Buy Canada

Key Benefits

- Faster time-to-revenue for new store openings
- Reduce time and cost of application deployment
- Enable controlled access by key vendors
- Support cost-effective thin devices such as kiosks
- Enable greater employee access to information



“We considered Citrix the only practical choice for effective application deployment to remote locations — and we still do,” noted Roy Brassington, Team Lead, LSDS Store Systems. “The other option was using a client/server architecture and fat PCs, which was too expensive and time-consuming in terms of administration.”

The Citrix and Microsoft solution runs on 65 IBM X-Series servers in a data center in Vancouver. For business continuity purposes, Best Buy Canada maintains a failover data center that replicates most of the data hosted in its main location.

SUPPORTING RAPID STORE EXPANSION WITH FAST APPLICATION DEPLOYMENT

“One of the biggest benefits of our Citrix solution is the ability to deploy our corporate applications to new locations quickly,” Brassington said. “These applications — especially reports and email — are critical to the stores’ operation. In addition, with the centralized deployment and management capabilities that Presentation Server provides, we save two to three days of deployment effort by several IT staff because we don’t have to configure devices or worry about client operating systems. Presentation Server supports any device, including our new kiosks.” Best Buy Canada’s IT staff also saves time when deploying upgrades across its many locations. “It’s very simple for us to centrally update an application or make changes to it.”

PROVIDING SECURE, CONTROLLED ACCESS FOR VENDORS

Best Buy Canada works with a number of outside vendors that provide ongoing services such as financing and credit and customer

support, and short-term services such as audit. These vendors need access to specific applications and data to perform their services, and Best Buy Canada uses Citrix Presentation Server to control and secure this access. “For example, our customer support vendor connects via a private leased line to a published Citrix desktop that includes different Web store orders, validations and internal customer order tracking tools,” explained Brassington. “The advanced management features of Citrix Presentation Server allow us to limit this access, so that the vendor gets what they need but nothing else.”

GREATER EMPLOYEE ACCESS WITH IN-STORE KIOSKS

Along with self-service public kiosks that allow customers to browse the Best Buy Canada and Future Shop websites, the company is implementing employee training kiosks that will replace workstations in its stores and provide access to key applications, such as our on-line stores and corporate intranet. “These kiosks will enhance information security because employees must log into the Citrix environment to access sensitive corporate applications,” noted Brassington. “These kiosks are actually thin client devices running Microsoft Windows XP. The ability to support any type of client made Citrix the logical choice to use with these new kiosks.”

“We adopted the Citrix Access Platform as our corporate standard for store locations, warehouses and vendors for several reasons: the solution simplifies application deployment and management, saves us time and money, and provides controlled access,” concluded Brassington. “Most important, the solution is enabling us to grow our business according to plan.”

Networking Environment

- Citrix Presentation Server™ running on 65 IBM X-Series servers
- Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003
- VPN, LAN, WAN (Frame Relay—ATM)
- 2,000 IBM PCs, 2,200 Wyse Winterm thin-client devices

Applications Deployed

Over 25 applications, including:

- Retek Merchandising System
- Microsoft® Office Suite
- Oracle Forms
- Clarify FrontOffice (Customer Service application)

About the Citrix Access Suite: Extending the world’s most widely deployed presentation server, the Citrix Access Suite™ is access infrastructure for the on-demand enterprise. The suite centralizes access to applications and information and enables IT staffs to deliver, manage, monitor and measure enterprise resources on demand.