

Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure poises Marubeni IT Solutions for the future.

First Case Study using Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard

DaaS achieves both ease of use and optimized cost

The true value of combining Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure and Azure Virtual Desktop

Marubeni IT Solutions, an IT solutions provider, has started full use of desktop as a service (DaaS) workloads for its subsidiary staff and 1000 employees. Their environment combines Microsoft's Azure Virtual Desktop technology with Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure. This is the first company-wide installation in Japan of a solution that succeeds in improving both the remote work experience, while also strengthening governance.

Offloading the VDI environment from the data center to the cloud

Marubeni IT Solutions has leveraged VDI for quite some time. It goes back more than 10 years to 2009 before the new company was established, and they provided "VIRTUATOP," a product for the general public. Then, thin-client terminal service systems based on standard Windows Server functions were still the mainstream, so pioneer users of VDI, which required a high-performance infrastructure, had a hard time optimizing resource allocations and dealing with failures.

When Marubeni IT Solutions formed out of the Marubeni Group in 2014, it was seamless for them to jump into a VDI environment since they had gained an immense amount of previous experience years prior. The company's VDI user base grew to about 1,000, including staff from development partners and subcontractors. However, as the scale of VDI application and use expanded, various issues became apparent. Nobufumi Murata, Senior PM, Solution Section, Security Solution Department, Solution Business Division, of Marubeni IT Solutions says, "we have been using VDI for a long time. Although referred to as a cloud service, the original VDI application occupied hardware and was essentially an on-premises solution. During use, host server performance started to deteriorate, and problems began to multiply. With the increase of remote VDI users, the service desk started receiving calls from users who said they could not start up the desktop."

That prompted Marubeni IT Solutions to consider migrating their VDI environment to the cloud. Nozomu Marui, Manager, Information System Section, Business Management Department, says, "As the Marubeni Group and affiliated companies share the data center and various resources, the performance problems we faced also occurred at

Marubeni IT Solutions

Industry

IT Solution Provider

Location

Tokyo, Japan

Citrix products

- Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure

Key Benefits

- Achieves both ease of use and optimized cost
- Offloading the VDI environment from the data center to the cloud
- Addressing the need for strengthening control, reducing costs and using know-how to expand into the market

other companies. Still, upgrading the host server and other resources would have been very costly and time-consuming. So we thought it would be best to offload the VDI computing environment from the data center to the cloud to reduce the load on the entire group," he recalls.

Early verification of Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure and Azure Virtual Desktop

In the summer of 2020, when Marubeni IT Solutions planned these cloud changes, they were considering the adoption of Azure Virtual Desktop. The reason for this choice, Marui says, "As a mega-cloud based on Azure, which is capable of migrating 1,000 user desktops in a short period of time, we felt we were in safe hands. In addition, the Azure Virtual Desktop version of Windows 10 enables multi-session connections allowing multiple users to simultaneously access a single virtual machine, as opposed to the single-user version of Windows 10 that requires a separate environment for each user. We thought this would dramatically increase the consolidation rate of VDI and reduce operational costs," he says.

However, there were still shortcomings, such as a lack of available end user devices and management functions. "The spread of COVID-19 forced many employees to work remotely, and this was a cause for concern in terms of operations," says Murata, "continued information gathering and discussions made us realize the ideal solution would be to combine Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure with Azure Virtual Desktop."

"Verification work started immediately, and we found we could take advantage of Citrix's extensive management functions that provide a variety of additional benefits. These benefits included access to devices such as Macs and tablets, use of HDX protocol-based image and audio compression technology for better web conferencing, as well as additional security features not provided in Standard Azure Virtual Desktop. Of course, Windows 10 multi-session is still available in Azure Virtual Desktop and incorporates into the Citrix environment. As this resolved our concerns, we decided that this system would provide a comfortable VDI environment for our employees," says Marui, explaining the reasons behind their choice.

Determining ideal multi-session usage and other issues

The company-wide migration of desktops to Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure with Azure Virtual Desktop started at the beginning of 2021. By mid-March, they had completed the migration of all desktops for about 1,000 users. This process went according to a two-phase schedule: first, they moved partner and subcontractor staff, and then their employees. It is worth mentioning that the migration of employees was completed in just two days. "All users switched from the old VDI environment to the Citrix solution almost at once, and we were able to start operations without any problems," says Murata.

"With regard to Windows 10 multi-session, we first tried using the manufacturer's recommendations for user assignment to virtual machines, which proved to be less than ideal. After changing the configuration, things quickly improved, and we are able to provide users with a reliable desktop environment. The management functions of Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure with Azure Virtual Desktop allow us to easily change and test various settings, which is very helpful," says Marui.

Since transitioning to Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure with Azure Virtual Desktop less than six months ago, Marubeni IT solutions has seen significant positive results.

"Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure with its intuitive management functions and pleasant usability is our definite advantage in reforming our work practices for the future."

Nobufumi Murata
Marubeni IT Solutions Inc.
Solution Business Div.
Security Solution Dept.
Security Solution Sec. 1
Senior PM

As Marui mentioned earlier, operations can now be more flexibly fine-tuned. Akihito Nishizawa, Security Solution Section, Security Solution Department, Solution Business Division, says that, “In the old VDI environment, users would complain that it took too long to get to the Windows 10 login screen,” and they were unable to find out why. Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure with Azure Virtual Desktop, however, has a function that displays on the management screen how long it takes for each step to connect to the desktop, which makes it possible to isolate and analyze in detail. We are now able to quickly identify and address bottlenecks that are degrading the user experience,” he says.

Addressing the need for strengthening control, reducing costs and using know-how to expand into the market

In addition, another key issue we had to resolve was to improve our governance over desktops. “The problem was that in the old VDI environment, we sometimes found users installing applications that had not been vetted by the company, so called shadow IT. They were minor issues such as the installation of text editors or image editors, but not issues you can overlook from a governance point of view. The current Citrix and Microsoft solution rigorously controls user privileges and is set to prevent any unauthorized changes to the system area so there is no cause for concern,” says Marui.

In addition, Marubeni IT Solutions has set up a detailed schedule that reflects daily usage to manage the power supply of Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure with Azure Virtual Desktop. The synergistic effect provided by the consolidation of users using Windows 10 multi-session reduces operational costs by minimizing operations involving unnecessary instances. Mr. Marui says, “We have been able to accumulate a lot of experience, including details that you will not learn unless you actually use and manage the system.”

Thanks to this successful installation, Marubeni IT Solutions is now ready to fully develop this VDI, based on Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard with Azure Virtual Desktop, as its own brand of DaaS. The company has already been asked to provide advice on large-scale projects involving several thousand users and has become an ongoing project.

“We have mastered how to use and leverage Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops Standard for Azure with Azure Virtual Desktop, as we have performed all the phases of installation and are now stabilizing the environment.”

“By combining such know-how and best practices, we are able to deliver an agreeable DaaS experience to a wide range of customers,” concludes Murata.

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