

Sharks Sports & Entertainment scores with mobile workstyles.



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Uy Ut
Director of IT
Sharks Sports & Entertainment

Sharks Sports & Entertainment, (SSE), headquartered in San Jose, California, owns and operates a number of sports properties across the United States, including two professional hockey teams: the National Hockey League’s San Jose Sharks in California and the American Hockey League’s Worcester Sharks in Massachusetts. SSE also manages the SAP Open men’s professional tennis tournament played annually at HP Pavilion in San Jose. They also manage the Regions Morgan Keegan Championships, a men’s professional tennis tournament and the Memphis International, a women’s professional tennis tournament, played in Tennessee. Additionally, SSE manages ice-skating rinks and a tennis and racquet club.

In the dynamic world of professional sports, the ability to change direction and move in an instant is the standard—and not just for the players. The entire sports management organization needs to be agile, flexible and mobile.

The challenge: enable a flexible, energy-efficient mobile workstyle

Scouts for SSE travel worldwide looking for new talent, and need to maintain constant contact with coaches and other executives for player negotiations and team strategy sessions. These scouts often share large information files and film clips with headquarters staff. The IT team at SSE was constantly traveling from venue to venue to manage and maintain various systems and endpoints to keep up with the on-going event schedule. To keep the organization moving efficiently, SSE needed a mobility solution to enable all employees and IT staff to work easily and flexibly from anywhere, any time.

Until recently, the IT staff conducted troubleshooting and support tasks on traditional desktop or laptop computers. However, the challenge of providing both round-the-clock support and exceptional user experience on multiple devices continued to grow. “When smart phones and tablets started infiltrating the locker room, I knew desktop virtualization was the answer,” said Uy Ut, director of IT for SSE, “mobility was inevitable and necessary.”

Key benefits

- Improved employee productivity and work-life balance
- Increased energy efficiency and cost savings
- Simplified IT management, lower support costs

At the same time, SSE was in the midst of a project to optimize the efficiency of their IT environment in line with Leadership in Energy for Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards, which provides ratings on building sustainability and energy efficiency. The IT team felt they could achieve the desired LEED certification standards by implementing a desktop virtualization solution on low-power thin clients and centralizing data for simplified management. In addition, they wanted to improve the user experience from the existing client/server solution, which was inconsistent and presented a significant technical support burden. “It was what you might call a ‘perfect storm’ for change,” concluded Ut.

Implementing a Citrix virtualization solution that empowers mobility

While SSE has been using Citrix XenApp® and Citrix GoToMeeting® for many years, Ut and his team evaluated several solutions before selecting Citrix XenDesktop® and Citrix Receiver™. “While the ability for Citrix to deliver applications and desktops to any device was the biggest winning factor for some, the key issue for me was the enhanced user experience. It’s about ease of use and mobility, and in the end, that’s what sold everyone on the Citrix solution,” said Ut.

The Citrix solution has proven to be the right choice. Because SSE is driven by events taking place in their venues nationwide, the IT team can now manage data and information from anywhere, whether at headquarters in California, a hockey game in Boston or even from home, twenty-four hours a day. Data security, user experience and IT troubleshooting have improved across every location.

“We consider our players to be our intellectual property,” noted Ut. “It’s imperative all of their pertinent and personal information remain private. With centralized applications, desktops and data, there’s no worry about the information being compromised because it’s not on the device. If someone loses an iPad at an airport, no one has to worry about that knowledge base getting into the wrong hands,” said Ut.

Ut continued, “Users love being able to use their thin client at work, take their tablet when they travel, go home and use their laptops—and yet still use the same applications and see the same personal desktop. It’s exactly the same experience wherever they are. And they can more easily work at home when necessary. It’s a win for their families, too,” said Ut.

Future Plans

SSE will be extending the Citrix solution to all of its scouts in the field. “When they’re looking for talent in more isolated locations, such as small towns in Russia, they’ll be able to see the same desktop view on their 3G smart phones. We’re really excited about it,” said Ut.

In summary, Ut says, “I can do everything remotely, on the fly. Of course there are cost savings—centralized data, thin clients—and it saves a lot of time, so that’s money. But for me, it’s the intangibles. At the end of the day, I have a better work-life balance—and so does everyone else at SSE who’s using the Citrix solution.”

Applications

Microsoft Office suite, including Microsoft Outlook

IT environment

- Citrix Receiver
- Citrix XenDesktop
- Citrix XenApp
- Citrix GoToMeeting



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