

# Datacentre virtualisation and application delivery



British Polythene Industries PLC

British Polythene Industries (BPI) has developed strategically over the last decade to become one of the largest producers of polyethylene film products worldwide. The business manufactures

and distributes a wide variety of products across a range of industry sectors and its UK recycling plants reprocess waste from industrial, commercial, agricultural and domestic sources.

In 2008 BPI began to evaluate the advantages of migrating to a complete, virtual environment.

“We had two initial objectives,” explained James Bunney, the IT Support Manager at British Polythene Industries. “The first phase of the project was to migrate all of our existing users to a thin-client environment with virtualised desktops. In tandem with this, we planned to improve our back-end infrastructure and enhance our disaster recovery and business continuity capabilities with the implementation of virtual servers.”

## The advantages of virtualisation

BPI recognised the numerous advantages that virtualisation would deliver and had already invested heavily in Citrix technologies. “As an organisation, we had already adopted Citrix as our strategic way forward, as this gave us far greater levels of operational efficiencies and provided the platform for future growth and service enhancement,” continued James Bunney.

With over 700 users throughout the UK and Canada, the provision of virtual desktops would improve the end-user experience and access to applications, streamline application maintenance and support, reduce demand on help desk services and relieve the internal IT team from the time consuming processes of regular on-site visits to the offices.

The dual project of server virtualisation would also ensure that corporate data was far more secure, reduce the demand on storage, automate the lengthy but business-crucial back-up processes and, in the event of a catastrophic failure, guarantee continuous service availability

via the seamless switching to a mirrored data centre.

## The search for a partner

“We had the internal capabilities to implement most of these objectives but we accepted that we were probably not as familiar with the latest virtualisation technologies as some of the virtualisation specialist organisations”, continued James Bunney. “Our existing systems were disparate, we had different server builds and wanted to move to a single build to give a uniform, virtualised desktop environment for all users. We recognised that in a project of this magnitude we were bound to face complex technical issues that were beyond the knowledge and experience that we possessed. It made sound financial and technical sense to identify a partner that could work with our IT team, help us identify best-of-breed technologies and provide the high end knowledge skills and knowledge transfer that we would undoubtedly need.”

Although BPI had previously partnered with EACS for Citrix licence support services, the critical nature of this major strategic project required a partner with the highest levels of virtualisation experience and expertise and in 2008, BPI issued a tender. Three organisations responded – one of these was EACS.

## The virtualisation experts

Founded in 1994, Cambridgeshire based EACS provides a valued IT partnership to organisations of all sizes throughout the UK. Services range from ad-hoc consultancy, support and training through to fully managed or hosted IT systems but EACS has particular expertise in the design, development, implementation and

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IT Support Manager , British Polythene Industries



support of complex virtualisation solutions.

“Citrix offers a dynamic end-to-end virtualisation system that transforms desktops and applications into on-demand services enabling users to work securely and productively from anywhere, revolutionising desktop management and simplifying data centre operations,” explained EACS’ Managing Director, Mike Dearlove. “EACS is virtually unique in the virtualisation services industry in that we are not allied to any particular virtualisation technology but match the immediate and long-term objectives of our clients with the latest technologies available from all major providers to deliver a flexible, best-of-breed, efficient and future-proofed solution that solves the pain of today and provides a solid platform for future expansion and growth.”

James Bunney agreed. “We had already been impressed with EACS’s services in licensing support,” he added. “EACS’s independence from OEMs meant that they could work with us to identify the technologies that we needed from a range of virtualisation options, ensuring that we would have a solution that was precisely tailored to our requirements.”

Working closely together, EACS and BPI’s IT team reviewed the benefits and capabilities that various available virtualisation technologies would deliver before deciding on a solution based around Citrix XenApp Platinum Edition.

Together, the two organisations identified the various processes that the implementation would require:

- The design and implementation of virtualised XenApp servers hosted on XenServer and dynamically provisioned with Citrix Provisioning Server

- The design and implementation of Citrix XenDesktop to support users that required more functionality than that provided by XenApp
- The implementation of AppSense Environment Manager for user profile management
- The installation of Branch Repeaters to optimise the connections between the larger branch offices and the primary data centre
- The implementation of NetScaler appliances to provide high availability for the remote access solution and acceleration and of web site traffic using Global Sever Load Balancing services

### The ‘Private Cloud’ concept

“In many ways, our overall objective was to implement a ‘private cloud’ as well as well as ensuring complete disaster recovery and contingency capabilities,” said James Bunney. “During the project we also migrated our existing data centre to a newer, more robust location and took the opportunity to upgrade our physical server farm to a virtual Citrix Server Farm and establish a physically separate mirrored data centre with comprehensive failover capabilities. Again, EACS worked extremely closely with us to get the overall infrastructure into position with minimal impact as far as our users were concerned.”

### EACS - “Our culture partner”

The initial objectives of the project have now been achieved and James Bunney recognises that without EACS’ expertise BPI would have faced considerable challenges in the more complex elements of the entire project.

With all commonly used applications now virtualised, BPI has published a standard

desktop to all 700 plus users, ensuring commonality and ease of access across the organisation. The virtualisation of applications allows fixes, updates and enhancements to be centralised without the need to physically update each PC, improving security and giving BPI a much clearer picture of application licensing and usage.

“Centralised management has given us complete visibility and transformed our operations and saved us a considerable amount of time and money in support and help desk services,” added James Bunney. “We no longer have to send engineers to remote sites to address user and isolated application issues and have a more robust, user friendly and secure solution.”

An unexpected but welcomed advantage from the migration to a fully virtualised infrastructure has been a reduction in BPI’s carbon footprint. As well as reducing operational costs by obviating the need for on-site visits by the internal IT team, the provision of virtualised desktops and the ease of access to applications and data from remote locations has allowed BPI to encourage employees to work from home on occasions, improving employee lifestyles and reducing travel to and from offices.

“EACS is our ‘culture partner’ and had the specialist virtualisation knowledge and experience that was critical to the success of this project,” explained James Bunney. “From the outset we knew that we needed a partner that could work alongside our IT team, resolving the more complex issues that were outside our own capabilities and providing knowledge sharing and transfer to ensure that we could progress the project at our own pace. In EACS we found our partner of choice.”

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