

Improving Business Processes and IT Delivery

Customer Case Study



Thales UK reduces risk and speeds time-to-benefit for virtual desktop strategy with blended services solution

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Thales Group

Industry: Aviation, defence and transportation

Location: United Kingdom

Number of Employees: 8,000

Challenge

- Develop virtual desktop strategy, enabling relocation of 280 staff while optimising productivity and IT services delivery
- Address project complexity, aggressive timescales and lack of internal virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) expertise

Solution

- Multivendor VDI solution comprising Cisco Nexus 5000 and 1000V Series Switches, HP servers and WYSE terminals
- VDI services from Cisco Services and GlassHouse Technologies for planning, design, installation and knowledge transfer

Results

- Project delivered on time and on budget with zero business disruption
- Streamlined business processes and simpler, lower cost IT model
- Faster time-to-provision—from days to hours

Challenge

The security of infrastructures and nations depends on leaders and organisations and their ability to decide and act in a timely fashion and obtain the best outcomes.

[Thales](#) provides equipment, systems and services that help its customers to master the critical decision chain. This understanding underpins the company's innovation and technological developments in areas such as large-scale software-driven systems, secure communications and sensors. Its expertise in secure network communications safeguards as many as 3.7 billion Bankers Automated Clearing Service transactions, worth about £1 trillion annually. As well as being a leader in on-board equipment for civil and military aircraft, the Group provides critical railway signalling and telecommunications infrastructure at 2,500 railway stations.

As a world-leading innovator, Thales recognises that the intelligent use of technology is a competitive advantage, if not a critical element in business success. With this in mind, the Group's UK business had been considering desktop virtualisation as a means of simplifying IT services delivery and improving productivity. An ideal opportunity presented itself when Thales UK was forced to relocate 280 staff from its Wells plant to new premises in Basingstoke, Bristol and Templecombe.

Faced with a potentially complex project with an immovable three-month deadline, the Thales UK project team recognised that it needed to bring in outside expertise.

"Introducing virtual desktops to enable greater opportunity for remote and home working was a critical enabler for all parties concerned: senior management, HR, IT and staff," says Steve Gathercole, project manager for Thales UK. "Before we could do that we had to inject some professional services in order to plug internal knowledge and skills gaps. Given the project's high-profile nature, we simply couldn't afford for anything to go wrong."

Solution

In search of a solution, the company turned to Cisco, its trusted partner and longstanding network provider. The two companies had worked together on numerous projects to minimise implementation risk and help ensure the successful deployment of new technologies.



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Nick Watson
Technical Architect
Thales UK

The first step was to assemble an expert team of desktop virtualisation specialists from Cisco Services and [GlassHouse Technologies](#), a Cisco partner specialising in data centre and virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) services. Drawing on complementary skills and experience gained on similar client engagements, Cisco Services and GlassHouse Technologies offered a one-stop approach for planning, design, installation and knowledge transfer.

“You always look for a partner who’s prepared to make a personal investment in your project,” says Nick Watson, technical architect at Thales UK. “It worked out really well. We got two experts bringing industry knowledge and engineering resources to the table. And service delivery was well co-ordinated and seamless throughout.”

The VDI services provided to Thales included a preparatory VDI-ready infrastructure assessment, high-level and low-level planning and design, and end-user training. Cisco Services and GlassHouse Technologies also helped to put in place a governance structure to help ensure timely decision-making and assist with project management.

Following technical workshops, Thales UK decided to implement two separate physical VDI domains (to IL3 and IL4 security standards) based on different user profiles and data security levels with both environments sized to handle 140 users immediately and up to 250 users in the future.

“Choosing a multivendor solution always raises an element of risk,” says Andy Hartland, project technical design specialist at Thales UK. “For example, will all the components work together from day one? Who will be accountable if there’s a problem? Are we likely to hit delays and extra costs? Thankfully we never needed to ask those questions.”

That was because Cisco Services and GlassHouse Technologies ran a proof-of-concept trial to thoroughly road-test the solution, which comprised Cisco Nexus® 5000 and 1000V Series Switches, HP servers and WYSE terminals.

Results

Thales UK completed its office relocation on time and on budget with no business disruption or impact to productivity. “The VDI project was a big success,” says Gathercole. “It was a great overall team effort and owes much to the contribution from Cisco Services and GlassHouse Technologies. They really helped get us there faster by avoiding potential problems and delays.”

The company is already enjoying many virtual desktop advantages. Each year Thales registers more than 300 patents. Anytime, anywhere access to core applications, such as email and computer-aided design tools, helps speed time-to-market by improving collaboration and shortening research and development cycles.

Other benefits include streamlined business processes and a simpler, lower-cost IT management model that has cut time-to-provision from days to hours. “Upon arrival, new employees complete a form and tick the applications and services they need,” says Hartland. “Using a golden image, we’re able to spin-up a virtual desktop with 40GB storage, in most cases providing same day turnaround. In the unlikely event there’s a problem, we don’t have to waste time investigating or troubleshooting. We simply reboot the image.”

Data security and compliance, key areas for any company with government customers, are also much easier to manage. Data that was previously stored locally on desktops now resides centrally and securely within the data centre, where it is easier to back up and manage version control. It also takes less time to complete software upgrades, strengthening business continuity and disaster recovery processes.

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Finally, the VDI project provides the company with a proven reference architecture, easily replicable to make the benefits more widely available. Thales continues to evaluate VDI as new projects arise within the business.

For More Information

For further information on Cisco Services, please go to:

www.cisco.com/go/advancedservices

Product List

Routing and Switching

- Cisco Nexus 5000 and 1000V Series Switches
- Cisco Catalyst® 3750X Series Switches
- Cisco® ACE Application Control Engine Module

Services

- Joint Cisco Services and GlassHouse Technologies VDI consultancy including:
 - Consulting services to agree project scope, statement of work, work packages, timeline, and roles and responsibilities
 - Preparatory VDI-ready infrastructure assessment to identify potential bandwidth, policy management and other network-related issues that could affect user experience
 - Technical workshops to present audit findings and recommendations
 - High-level and low-level planning and design
 - Full range of implementation services including creation of 14 user profiles to standardise and speed-up provisioning
 - End user training to demonstrate solution, gather feedback and address concerns



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