

Case Study: Conversant Group

User-centric IT infrastructure and security consulting company specializing in legal firms trusts PrinterLogic to provide ease of management and empower end users in dynamic Citrix environments.



Challenges

- *Printing in Citrix environments could be difficult, and the use of print servers involved susceptibility to single points of failure and downtime.*
- *A high degree of geographic roaming complicated printer installation for end users, resulting in support calls and general dissatisfaction with printing.*
- *Access to customers' print environments was fragmented, which added extra steps to routine processes of management and oversight.*

Results

- *Print servers have been completely eliminated and Citrix printing enhanced through PrinterLogic's serverless print infrastructure.*
- *End users can travel anywhere and easily install printers themselves as needed through PrinterLogic's web-based self-service portal.*
- *PrinterLogic's MSP portal has consolidated and streamlined the management of diverse environments via a single pane of glass.*

Founded in 2009 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, [Conversant Group](#) is an IT infrastructure and security consulting company that provides technical, organizational and procedural consulting and services to an international client base. Of the approximately 250 companies and organizations it serves, around 70 percent are from the legal field. These law firms are spread across North America.

Uniquely for an IT company, Conversant Group views technology not as an end in itself but as a tool that's ultimately designed to empower the people that make up any given organization. The recommendations its experts make, the solutions it provides and the uncompromising approach it takes to customer satisfaction are all geared toward this end.

That philosophy also makes Conversant Group particularly receptive to end-user-centric solutions like PrinterLogic, which they first discovered at a Citrix-themed trade fair in 2016, as the company's Chief Operating Officer Brandon Williams explains.

"We were standing in line to get our conference badges, and our founder, John Anthony Smith, got to talking with the person in front of us. 'Who are you here with? Oh, [PrinterLogic](#)? I've heard of it but tell me exactly what you do.' And when they explained what PrinterLogic was, John was like, 'We need to have a conversation.'"

Smith and Williams quickly recognized that PrinterLogic could be a key solution in their company's portfolio on

account of its ability to eliminate print-server infrastructure while bringing newfound functionality and ease of use to complex print environments. Many law firms make use of virtual solutions like Citrix Virtual Desktops (formerly XenDesktop) to give their users added flexibility and mobility, for example, and Conversant's team foresaw that PrinterLogic's seamless integration with VDI environments would improve print management as well as add further consistency to the end-user experience.

"Citrix can sometimes amplify certain quirks that are already present in the environment, printing being one of them," says Williams.

"This notion of a solution focused on end-user printing, one that facilitated printing without having to have a print server, was very interesting to us. And we saw it as something that would be very useful and attractive to our customers."

After researching PrinterLogic further, Conversant Group began recommending and offering the solution to its customers in 2018. Today, the organization is managing printing for five large law firms with a combined fleet of around 200 printers through PrinterLogic's MSP portal, and those numbers are anticipated to grow as Conversant Group itself expands.

Challenge #1—Eliminating Single Points of Failure and Mastering Citrix Printing

"Citrix printing has always been a challenge for us," says Williams. "It's gotten better over the years, but I wouldn't say it's perfect, and it's complicated further if shared print queues on a print server are involved."

In the legal field, where printed documentation is of vital importance, there's a need for any form of printing, Citrix or not, to function as smoothly and efficiently as possible. Using conventional print-management solutions, it's difficult for administrators and service providers like Conversant to configure printer deployments or manage drivers with any degree of ease or reliability.

"What we normally see when we walk into an environment is the default printer on the local machine will get mapped into Citrix. If a user has multiple printers in their queue, they're only mapping the default printer in from their local machine into the Citrix Windows 10 VDI session. Immediately the user is limited in their ability to print to other printers."

Print servers are typically used in these situations to assist in providing printing capabilities and improving print management, but they can become single points of failure that have the opposite effect, resulting in downtime and reduced print availability.

Solution

PrinterLogic's centrally managed direct-IP printing model creates a serverless print infrastructure that can be administered from a single pane of glass, even across multiple locations. This is ideal for VDI environments like Citrix, as PrinterLogic seamlessly integrates alongside the virtual solution to enhance its native printing capabilities while also allowing organizations to fully eliminate print servers.

"If a print queue locks up or the print spooler on a server crashes, preventing everyone in the environment from being able to print, you've removed that from the equation when you pull the print server out," Williams says.

"With PrinterLogic, it's the software agent that gets the printers pulled down. Then the computer is talking to the printer directly and not having to make sure a print queue is online. We can then remove the print server altogether."

Although PrinterLogic offers several deployment options to suit almost any virtualization use case, Conversant Group prefers to deploy the PrinterLogic software client on the VDI master image, which is then provisioned to the pool of thin clients. Through simple one-time configuration via the admin console, the PrinterLogic client can determine local printers and automatically make them available to the user in the current session.

Challenge #2—Empowering End Users with Self-Service Printer Installation

"Law firms want to be very mobile," says Williams. "They want to work from literally anywhere in the world, and they want the flexibility of printing wherever they are. VDI enables them to have the same user experience whether they're in San Francisco or New York. It's literally as if they picked up their computer and took it with them."

Printing, however, can be much more complicated when there's a large pool of randomly roaming users, and it's difficult for organizations to ensure the same consistency of experience when a user changes locations frequently.

"The MSP portal is a single pane of glass for us to make tweaks and changes across our managed customers. It's where the fun takes place. We can go in and define our customers and manage the queues from the cloud space. It's a much simpler place to go, and it's consistent across all customers."

The traditional method of providing self-service capabilities—if those capabilities are provided at all—has been to allow users to map printers themselves. But, as Williams points out, that process can become confusing to the average user: “This printer is named cga-01765, and this one’s cga-01766. What does that actually mean?” That confusion increases the likelihood of incorrect installations as well as tense help-desk calls.

“It was a real challenge for us to make sure that when an attorney traveled and they sat down at the desk in another office, they could print when they needed to. Because if they can’t, it’s a big deal.”

Solution

PrinterLogic’s self-service portal addresses this problem from both sides of the printer-installation equation: It allows admins to present their end users with a limited but appropriate set of printer choices based on their location, and it empowers end users to clearly identify those nearby printers and install them with a single click.

This is made even easier through the web-based portal’s optional floor plan maps, which present a visual representation of the user’s current location along with clickable printer icons.

“The self-service portal takes that burden off of the administrative staff in any of the offices, and it makes the experience the same for the attorney regardless of whether they’re in one office or another,” says Williams.

“If an attorney does travel to a different site, it’s easy enough for them to go in and look at that floorplan and pick the printer they want. After that, they’re printing in New York, and then tomorrow they’re back on a plane to San Francisco, where they can get their printers the same way. That makes PrinterLogic a very mobile solution for them inside their VDI desktop.”

Challenge #3—Administering Multiple Customers Through a Single Pane of Glass

Every organization is different. Even organizations in the same industry using the exact same solution will naturally have different configurations, different use cases, different requirements. For managed service providers like Conversant Group, consolidating the way in which organizations are overseen and managed can help mitigate these variations from customer to customer and improve the overall efficiency of management.

With conventional print-management solutions, this kind of streamlining is hard to achieve. Print servers, for instance, typically result in fragmentation that adds time-consuming steps to every remote administrative task.

“It used to be that we would have to log into a customer’s environment, drill into their systems, find where their printers were managed, and then do what we needed to do to add or change or replace drivers and printers and things like that,” says Williams. In some environments, he adds, the path to the print-management hub can be even more labyrinthine.

“Virtualization has created what they call ‘server sprawl’. It’s easy to right-click and create a new Windows server. Too easy. If we can have fewer of those, it’s typically better.”

Solution

A unique and powerful feature, called the MSP portal, builds on the simplicity and user-friendliness that lies at the heart of PrinterLogic’s next-generation solution. It takes the thinking behind PrinterLogic’s centralized administrative console and self-service portal and extends it to the management of multiple environments.

“The MSP portal is a single pane of glass for us to make tweaks and changes across our managed customers. It’s where the fun takes place,” Williams says. “We can go in and define our customers and manage the queues from the cloud space. It’s a much simpler place to go, and it’s consistent across all customers.”

The ease and simplicity of administration allows Conversant Group to be more responsive to customer requests, and even proactive in many cases. It also saves cumulative time spent on print management.

“It’s quicker to get to the end result with the MSP portal—and PrinterLogic in general. We don’t have to dig through the layers of access to get to where the management of the printer lives. Because we don’t have to ‘remember’ where printers are managed for customer A and then for customer B, it allows for quicker turnaround times. It’s a much easier mechanism for us to manage, control and ensure that everything is correct.”

“PrinterLogic is an improved experience for users. They love it. And then you can get rid of all your print servers, give the management of the printer back to the user, and have single-pane-of-glass management of your printers through the MSP portal.”

Conclusion and Savings Summary

For Conversant Group, the effect of every PrinterLogic benefit has been twofold. By improving both the management of diverse print environments and the end-user printing experience, PrinterLogic has helped to reduce the time Conversant and its customers spend on print management while increasing customer satisfaction.

“No feedback is good feedback in printing, because if there’s any feedback in printing, it’s almost always negative,” says Williams. “The number of conversations around printing goes down once PrinterLogic is implemented and IT is trained on its use. We just don’t really hear about it anymore. That’s a win for us as well as our customers.”

He cites the precipitous drop in resources needed for printer installations as one of the most obvious cost and time savers. One Conversant Group customer, a 300-user law firm based in New York, was able to cut its help-desk ticket volume in half after implementing PrinterLogic. Nearly all those tickets had been print-related.

“PrinterLogic is an improved experience for users. They love it. And then you can get rid of all your print servers, give the management of the printer back to the user, and have single-pane-of-glass management of your printers through the MSP portal. Plus it works in VDI as an enhancement to Citrix. We found it based on a need, and no matter where you put it, it fits the bill perfectly.”

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