



Hundreds of IBMers decide “thin” is in for desktop clients

Sometimes, your best customers are right in your own company. At least, that's what IBM found when what started as a small pilot with 60 “knowledge workers” replacing conventional PCs with IBM Network Station network computers turned into a tidal wave of 700 network computing “converts” within the company.

What made the Network Station so intriguing to these IBM employees was the fact that the initial pilot group included some of IBM's most demanding users: its research teams. Their positive experience in using the Network Station to access PC-based productivity applications was simply infectious.

“Call it ‘eating your own cooking,’ if you like. But we wanted to see first-hand what, if any, issues arose when replacing PCs with network computers,” says Art Williams, leader of the original pilot at IBM's Thomas Watson Research Lab.

Expanded application access

According to Williams, the objective of the “NC 700 rollout” was to evaluate the transition from running applications locally on fat-client PCs to running them on time-shared servers accessed by thin-client Network Stations. The applications used in the project were those that IBM's

workers were already using in their day-to-day business: Lotus SmartSuite, Lotus Notes 4.51, Netscape Navigator and 3270 terminal emulation. To access PC applications from the network, the team used WinCenter Pro, a multiuser version of Windows NT manufactured by Network Computing Devices, Inc.

Starting with 60 “knowledge worker” users in May 1997, a team from IBM's Global Services organization transitioned another 210 users in June, 230 more in August, plus another 200 users from the Thomas Watson Research Labs at various times throughout the project. Eventually, the rollout encompassed five IBM sites and 37 servers in New York and Connecticut.

Application	Desktop PC replacement, access to Windows-based productivity applications, and terminal access to multiple servers
Hardware	IBM Network Station, IBM PC Servers, IBM AS/400, IBM S/390
Software	Lotus SmartSuite, Lotus Notes 4.51, Netscape Navigator, 3270 terminal emulation, IBM Network Station Manager, WinCenter Pro





Built to scale

Because of the rapid implementation schedule, the IBM team responsible for the rollout devised ways to automate critical aspects of its installation. For instance, instead of loading and testing individual network operation and configuration files on each server in the project, the team created disk images of fully tested configurations for each of three types of servers and loaded these images onto the target servers.

“Creating disk images not only saved time, but guaranteed that each server type had the same level of software in an identical configuration,” Williams says. “This made support and troubleshooting much easier.”

The group also automated the process for installing applications in user accounts. Using special batch-style routines, they eliminated the need to log in to each account, open an application and manually personalize it for the user.

“I think we’ve proven that implementing Network Stations can be a very straightforward process, regardless of the scale,” Williams says.

Easy to use

Another thing the NC 700 project proved was that moving from desktop computing to network computing offers significant benefits for users and administrators, with very little risk. This is especially true, Williams says, for knowledge workers who need access to PC productivity applications, server-based business applications, e-mail and the Internet – in other words, for the vast majority of today’s desktop computer users.

“Our users noticed almost no difference between working on the Network Station and their PCs,” Williams says. “They had more up-to-date versions of their familiar applications, the same or better access to servers, an easy-to-navigate graphical interface and performance that many felt was superior to a PC’s, even for those who were formerly running 133 MHz Pentiums. Overall, the people we studied were overjoyed to be rid of PC management and operating system concerns.”

Williams also found that in many cases he could support more than 100 users on a single four-way, Intel-based server because the Network Station is optimized to reduce bandwidth requirements. “Originally we assumed only 20 or 30 users per server,” he says.

The NC 700 project also demonstrated the Network Station’s ability to drastically reduce support costs. Says Williams: “We don’t do deskside ‘house calls’ anymore. Everything is managed at the server. And a server cluster manageable by a single administrator can support a huge user population while being less time intensive than deskside support.”

For more information

To find out more about how network computing with the IBM Network Station and the IBM family of servers can help you make the most of your business opportunities, call 1 800 IBM-7080, priority code 6N7BK005, in North America. Outside North America, call 416 383-5152, priority code 6N7BK005. Or contact your IBM Business Partner or local IBM representative.

If you have access to the Internet, you can find additional Network Station information via the World Wide Web at <http://www.ibm.com/nc>



© International Business Machines Corporation 1998

IBM Corporation
Route 100
Somers, NY 10589

1-98

All Rights Reserved

This application brief illustrates how one customer uses IBM products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; IBM does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

This publication is not an endorsement of user programs or system design. References in this publication to IBM products or services do not imply that IBM intends to make these available in all countries in which IBM operates.

IBM, AS/400 and S/390 are registered trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation.


The e-business logo is a trademark of International Business Machines Corporation.

Lotus, Notes and SmartSuite are trademarks or registered trademarks of Lotus Development Corp.

All other company names or products are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies.



As an Energy Star Partner, IBM has determined this product meets the Energy Star Program guidelines for energy efficiency.

 Printed in the United States of America on recycled paper containing 10% recovered post-consumer fiber.