



DATALIANT HELPS APARTMENT OWNERS MANAGE TECHNOLOGY ON A BUDGET

A big challenge for any business is finding ways to maintain an effective technology infrastructure while keeping costs in check. For Walton Communities, an apartment development and management company serving Atlanta's northern suburbs, the solution since the late 1990s has been to outsource its IT requirements to Dataliant, Inc.

"We decided a long time ago that outsourcing is more cost-effective than hiring in-house technology folks," say Keith Davidson, one of the company's owners and its chief financial officer. "We rely on Dataliant because they understand how to deliver a smooth, efficient operation. Their recommendations are well thought out-and they work."

Citrix Thin-Client Solution Eliminates Multiple Networks

In 2004 Dataliant suggested that Walton replace the standalone networks at each of its nine communities with a thin-client solution based on Microsoft® Windows® Server 2003 Terminal Server and Citrix® MetaFrame® Presentation Server.

"We were spending a lot of time just keeping up with critical patches, software updates, and upgrades to their property management software," says Dataliant senior engineer Jeff Miotke. "We had to visit every computer at each location, which was really creating a lot of maintenance expense for Walton Communities."

The disparate nature of the infrastructure also interfered with the ability of Walton personnel to access and share information. Data had to be transmitted at night to the corporate headquarters, which meant the information was usually at least a day old by the time it was available to management. In other cases, hardcopy documents had to be keyed into the system before information could be shared.

Greater Efficiency Supports Continued Growth

"This project represented a fairly large investment for us," says Davidson. "We believed our maintenance costs would go down immediately, but ultimately we went with the upgrade to improve our work process. Finding ways to be more efficient has enabled us to keep growing without adding overhead."

Making the transition to the new infrastructure required only a few weeks and has yielded immediate benefits. The new, thin-client solution now enables users to access critical applications and current data through the company's central servers.

"We converted all the old PCs to terminals," says Miotke. "Walton employees are able to access their software and data from any location. Another benefit with Citrix is that it allows file and printer sharing. That wasn't possible when all the locations were running on separate networks."

Davidson agrees that anywhere, anytime access has given the company's owners and employees a secure, practical way to work remotely. "We can now access information anywhere we can plug into the Internet," he says. "It works just as well from home or on the road as it does when we're in the office."

Repurposing Existing Equipment Yields More Savings

While reducing costs was not the overriding rationale for the project, the migration to Citrix has definitely helped Walton's bottom line.

"Because the Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Servers are hosting the software in a central location, we're able to install critical patches or upgrades much more easily," Miotke says. "The thin-computing approach also enabled us to turn the company's obsolete PCs into workstations and extend their useful life. Plus, when the PCs fail, we'll be able to replace them with thin-client machines that are much more affordable to acquire and maintain."

"Dataliant's strategy was well executed," Davidson says. "The efficiency we've gained will help us to continue growing without new overhead."