



Rock-solid Security and Reliability for High Volume Call Centers



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Mike Novak

Chief Technology Officer

Americall Group, Inc., Naperville, Illinois

Data stays secure when shifts change at call centers operated by Americall Group, Inc. (AGI), because CTO Mike Novak switched from desktop PCs to Wyse thin clients. Instead of patching older operating systems to respond to security audits—a labor-intensive process with desktop downtime—Novak built a secure data center where Tele Service Representatives (TSRs) connect using Wyse thin clients with two-factor authentication. Only mouse clicks and screen images travel the network. Nothing is downloaded to the desktop and no one has access to portable media for copying files.

Novak moved to thin clients during the consolidation of three call centers into one supercenter. He chose Wyse thin clients to minimize disruption during the transition, reduce maintenance, and improve productivity. “We’ve gone from having numerous problems everyday to weeks without an issue,” said Novak. The IT department can now focus on priority issues that have more to do with meeting customer demands and supporting other non-thin computing call centers.

Challenge: Consolidate Call Centers

When Novak began planning for the consolidation, he saw a chance to upgrade the desktop computing platform used by the center TSRs. The older PC operating system required major upgrades to pass new security standards, while deploying applications to 600 desktops had become time-consuming and inefficient. TSRs did not need a full-fledged PC desktop, just a Web browser to log-in to their Citrix Presentation Server session and access ASD Softswitch™, a proprietary call-center application.

In addition to the long-term benefits, Novak hoped to make the move with minimum disruption. When TSRs can’t make calls, AGI loses revenue. Novak’s responsibility was to bring each seat up as quickly as possible.



Solution Architecture

- Wyse Products
 - 600 Wyse thin client devices
- Servers
 - Citrix® Presentation Server
 - Microsoft Windows® 2003 Terminal Services
- Network
 - Gigabit network
 - Wyse Device Manager, Workgroup Edition
- User Applications
 - ASD Softswitch™, a proprietary call-center application
 - Authentication: 2-factor proprietary authentication for ASD browser

Solution: Wyse Thin Computing

Laura Trefil, president of Trefil Consulting, recommended Wyse thin clients. "From a cost-efficiency standpoint and reputation, we went with the best solution on the market," said Trefil. Wyse thin clients give AGI's TSRs highly secure, fast, and reliable access to ASD Softswitch for outbound predictive dialing.

The IT center determines the configuration and uses Wyse Device Manager to make it available on all thin client desktops. Users simply log-in to a Citrix session and all of the processing is handled on powerful, centralized servers. All work and data remain in the data center with just screen images, mouse and keyboard clicks traveling the network.

Americall's IT platform is based on Windows 2000/2003 and XP, as well as Citrix and thin clients at the desktop, servers, and database applications (SQL Server-based). The network is predominantly 100/1000-base-T/100 switches, with the WAN composed of a combination of frame relay, VPN, and point-to-point circuits. Inbound centers are connected with a minimum of two WAN paths for redundancy.

The Wyse thin clients are smaller and quieter than PCs, and take less than 30 seconds to boot up. They have no hard drive or removable media drives, and no moving parts to break. It is nearly impossible for a TSR to inadvertently or intentionally disable their thin client, maximizing uptime and call completion.

"The hardware is no longer a reason for poor performance," Novak said. "If we have TSRs with low call rates, we can be pretty sure it wasn't due to hardware-related issues."

Benefits: Rapid Deployment and Maximum Uptime

Once the new supercenter was set up, the IT team determined the migration path by moving 20 users over the weekend. The success of the first deployment led to another 150 TSRs relocated on Monday, 200 on Wednesday, and the remaining 200-plus seats relocated by the end of the week in a rapid deployment, unmatched by PC deployments.

Americall started saving on the day they unpacked the Wyse systems. Thin clients cost less than PCs and require little, if any, hands-on configuration or management. The consolidation and move to thin computing reduced administrative overhead from six technicians to about one half-time technician.

"If there is a problem, we know we can deploy a configuration and image the floor again within 20 minutes," said Trefil. "We keep extra devices on site, just in case."

Better Customer Care

In the new supercenter, TSRs log in, establish credentials and begin calling. With more statistics for the entire floor, managers check uptime by floor, row, or station. If a TSR has a low call rate, the IT department can monitor the device and see if the TSR is logged in and what applications they are using. With thin computing providing access to applications and resources, Novak envisions eliminating the



need for applications on the desktop both in the call centers and the back office.

"When we consolidated three call centers into one supercenter," Novak said, "we needed an acceptable technology in a lock-down state that we could manage centrally. Thin computing and Wyse thin clients proved to be a really good, rock-solid solution that is turning a lot of heads in the company."

About Americall

Founded in 1984, AGI, a subsidiary of SR Teleperformance, is a major provider of outsourced contact center services. AGI specializes in new customer acquisition, customer care and customer service, retention and loyalty programs, and off-shore solutions for financial services, insurance, member services, student loan servicing, consumer products, telecommunications, and business-to-business companies. SR Teleperformance contact centers handle more than one billion contacts in 36 languages and dialects each year with 30,000 partners and employees in 179 contact centers.

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