



SUCCESS STORY

Repco
Winterm™ Retail Industry



Repco enhances image using Wyse Winterms

Overview

As Australia and New Zealand's largest automotive parts supplier, Repco has 420 branches and seven warehouses. When Repco began overhauling its retail sites and establishing several new ones, the company realised that its legacy branch hardware was difficult to manage over so many geographic locations, and costly to maintain. After implementing a thin computing architecture from Wyse, Repco has reduced the time it takes to connect a new branch from days to hours, and greatly reduced IT support and maintenance costs.





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Background

Repcos Limited is the largest supplier of parts to the automotive aftermarket industry in Australia and New Zealand. Operating for more than 80 years, Repcos now employs 5,000 staff across Australia and New Zealand in 420 branches and seven warehouses.

Infrastructure refresh needed

When Repcos listed on the Australian Stock Exchange in 2003, it revealed an aggressive acceleration plan to establish several greenfield sites and to re-locate a significant number of existing branches to prime retail sites over the coming years.

As part of this project, Repcos decided to overhaul its legacy branch hardware which the company had been using since the 1970s. It also opted to restructure the branch network by upgrading to a virtual private network which was rolled out over a period of five months in mid-2003.

According to Garry Cleaver, Operations Manager for Information Services at Repcos, the legacy branch controllers had become increasingly cumbersome to support.

"The costs of supporting the old hardware on the branch system were mounting and with so many branches spread across a vast geographic region, it was difficult to offer support remotely," said Garry. "We would often use contractors in local areas when on-the-ground work needed to be carried out but this was becoming increasingly expensive."

Thin is in

As part of the IT systems overhaul, Repcos decided to move to a thin client environment to run its cash register and docket roll system which had previously worked off old green screen computers which were past the end of their shelf life.

"Repcos had considered thin clients before but on the old network it just wasn't possible. Once the VPN was installed we took another more serious look at deploying Wyse Winterm thin clients to replace the old green screen terminals."

A model branch was fitted out in Mulgrave, Melbourne which was used as the blueprint for future branches. The Mulgrave site was fitted out with Wyse thin clients and flat-screen monitors, contributing to the more modern look and feel which Repcos wanted to achieve in its new branches.

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Garry Cleaver
Operations Manager
for Information
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“We have more than 400 Wyse terminals installed to date, with an average of eight terminals per branch,” said Garry. “Refitting a branch is an expensive undertaking and we have plans in place to gradually roll out the new hardware. We’re currently upgrading about 40 branches a year, and installing the new Wyse terminals at the same time.”

For each new branch opening, the team at Repco package up an IT kit which contains the pre-configured Wyse Winterm 3125SE devices along with routers, switches, cables, docket rolls, cash-drawers, scanners and flat-screen monitors. The Windows CE enabled Winterm device accesses the mainframe warehouse and POS applications via the VPN and Microsoft Windows CE Terminal Server. The Winterms are also deployed with a mainframe emulation package which converts SNA traffic to IP.

Reducing installation times

“Using thin client technology from Wyse has made it so much easier for us to fit out our new branches. We now have what we call a ‘branch-in-a-box’ solution, where we pack up the Winterms, screens and other hardware and ship them to the new site. Repco have a roving team of fit-out coordinators that fit out new branches and install the IT systems. It’s a simple, quick, foolproof installation,” said Garry.

“With the old hardware, we were having trouble keeping up with the rate of new branch openings; it previously took three to four days to connect a new branch. Using Wyse Winterms, we can now have a branch networked and ready for business within three hours.”

Branch staff delighted

Retail staff also love the new system; the flat screens take up less counter space and the look of the Winterms device and monitors go well with the more modern design. Staff have also found the VGA displays to be a relief on the eyes compared to the old ‘green screens’.

Retail branches are also enjoying the benefits of ‘always-on’ internet access with the new system. “With the old network, branches had to dial up about three times a day just to check email. Now, they are always connected and two-way communication has become much more efficient,” said Garry.

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Reduced support costs

The new system has also alleviated demands on Repco's team of helpdesk staff, which operate the centralised helpdesk seven days a week from 6am to 7pm. The thin client system is far more reliable and user friendly, requiring less need for intervention from the helpdesk team.

Now the branch hardware upgrade is well underway, Repco is looking ahead to new applications and uses for the network. "Our experience with thin clients has been very positive, particularly as they've been deployed successfully in the most important part of our business, the branch network," said Garry. "This technology was driven around our ability to support our branches, but is now driving the vision on what our branch in the future will look like and the applications they will have access to. For example, one area we're looking at now is getting a Human Resources application onto the branch network so that staff are able to access their own records, request leave, submit sick-leave forms etc. The new thin client environment has opened up so many new possibilities for Repco, it feels like we're only scratching the surface."

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**Repcos
Winterm™ Retail Industry**

Solution Architecture

Applications Accessed

Warehouse and POS applications

Number of Users

Currently 400, growing to approximately 2,500

Model

Wyse® Winterm™ 3125 SE

Terminal Server Operating System

Windows CE

Network Used

Telstra VPN

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International Sales

France +33 1 39 44 00 44
www.wyse.com.fr

India +91 80 51528588

UK +44 (0) 118 923 2740
www.wyse.co.uk

Germany +49 (0) 89 4600990
www.wyse.com.de

Singapore +65 6728 WYSE
www.wyse.com.sg

United States +1 408 473 1200
www.wyse.com

Wyse Technology
Level 11, 100 Miller St
North Sydney
NSW 2060 Australia
Ph. +61 (0) 2 9492 0180
www.wyse.com.au