Clark Builders brings virtualization to the Great White North

Clark Builders, which was formed in Yellowknife, NWT in 1974 and is now also based in Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta, retains its roots in Canada’s north and radiates the can-do, entrepreneurial spirit that characterizes life in Canada’s most remote regions. Clark Builders performs commercial, institutional and industrial construction throughout Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, the Yukon, and is expanding into British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Clark Builders is an employee owned company who is on Canada’s 50 Best Managed and 50 Best Employer’s list. After experiencing substantial growth over the past 10 years, the company recognized it needed to refresh its technology infrastructure significantly. “We’ve grown in people, revenue and project size, even in the economic downturn,” said Dean Doige, Director of Information Services at Clark Builders. “Where we hadn’t grown was in our technology. We knew we needed to centralize our information and consolidate into one datacenter.”

Challenge – Long View Systems helps Clark Builders conceive and create a modern infrastructure to support a mobile workforce in changing and challenging locations

Clark Builders had significant business needs. Operating three offices and up to 60 sites (essentially remote offices)—at a time, it has an ultra-mobile work force. Clark Builders needed to be able to set up job sites quickly, and occasionally in problematic locations such as north of the Arctic Circle, so connectivity and data access were a big concern.

Clark Builders worked with Long View Systems, one of the largest IT solutions and services companies in North America. “Dean was leading the charge into the brave new world,” said Alex Stieda, senior account executive at Long View. “We were able to help with their original Citrix farm and provide some value-add advice about future direction.”

Long View recommended an end-to-end Citrix solution including Citrix® XenApp™ to deliver applications, Citrix Access Gateway™ to provide redundant secure access, Citrix Branch Repeater™ for WAN optimization, and Citrix Profile Manager™ for profile management across the servers.

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Solid reasons for selecting Citrix

Jason Stoik, IS architect at Clark Builders, listed off a multitude of reasons for choosing Citrix. “Lots of flexibility, good support, a widespread user community, product suite integration, industry-best-in-class, proven stability and scalability,” said Stoik. “Also key for us was the Citrix partnership with Microsoft. The fact that Citrix integrates seamlessly with Microsoft App-V ensures we have industry-class stability and flexibility to adapt with changing business requirements.”

Doige agreed. “I think a lot of it is reputation,” he said. “Citrix has become a household name within the IT industry. There’s a strong brand name and there’s a strong reputation of creating great products. Tried, tested and proven.”

Remarked Stoik: “We considered various WAN optimization solutions, but Branch Repeater provided us with the flexibility we needed both for short consolidation and long term Citrix application delivery strategies. Moreover, Branch Repeater optimizes our Citrix solution through its unmatched traffic management, prioritization and acceleration capabilities for the ICA protocol.”

“As a long-time Citrix Access Gateway customer, we initially selected it because it was the obvious end-to-end choice to complement and integrate with our Citrix solution,” added Stoik.” As we evolve and expand our virtualization footprint with the rollout of XenDesktop, Citrix Access Gateway takes on even greater significance by providing the critical flexibility and security we need to maximize the value of our Citrix investment.”

Solid benefits achieved through end-to-end Citrix virtualization

**Agility**

Citrix began delivering benefits immediately, “As a construction firm with up to 60 projects running at one time, agility is a critical requirement for us. Citrix application delivery technology provides us with unmatched flexibility that allows us to have a project site up and running in a matter of hours,” said Doige. “Sometimes we are issued a purchase order from the client, and the next day we’re mobilizing. With Citrix, we can be online very quickly with desktops and apps, no matter where we are—which is a significant competitive differentiator for us. We have a bunch of new projects coming on board right now. The superintendents literally show up at their job site and they’re running. They don’t have that two-to-three week delay in getting IT resources set up.”

**Any time, anywhere information access**

The Citrix solution also provides a more mobile work style. “A superintendent can go home with his laptop and work just as if he was at the job site,” said Doige. “He can also come into the office and be completely connected. The superintendents think this remote access solution is extremely beneficial because it’s so much easier to collaborate and communicate with their project managers.”

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**Key benefits**

- Agility in opening field offices quickly
- Secure, centralized data
- Anytime, anywhere access

**Applications delivered**

- Microsoft® Office® 2010
- Microsoft Sharepoint®
- Legacy applications

**Networking environment**

- Citrix XenDesktop
- Citrix XenApp
- Citrix Branch Repeater
- Citrix Access Gateway
- Citrix Profile Manager
- Microsoft Windows 7
Centralized information

Having critical business information such as purchase orders, invoices and job costing centralized and online delivers “huge benefits” Doige said. “Before Citrix, project managers were literally taking memory sticks, flying information all the way up to the job site, copying it to the local network within the job site trailer, copying other information from the job site onto the memory stick and flying it all the way back to Edmonton. You can just imagine the lack of efficiency. Now we have documents created, stored and easily accessed by everyone in the central datacenter.”

“We have remotely accessible information that is now available in real time,” added Stoik. “That enables our project managers to evolve from being concerned with data entry and upload to focusing on and running their jobs more effectively. As a result, we now can run our projects better and make more money doing it.”

Ease of use

Another big success was ease of use. Many of the superintendents were not computer savvy, and one of their major complaints was the configuration was different at each job site. “Citrix gives superintendents the ability to easily access their same desktop regardless of where they are,” said Doige. “So you teach them once, and no matter where they go, they have that same desktop with the same user access experience, and they have all their information right there. It’s not a new learning experience every single time. People are very satisfied with Citrix.”

Efficiency

The efficiency of application maintenance immediately improved. Doige explained that his IS employees at Clark Builders would often set up a job site infrastructure, and the next day receive a call from the superintendent requesting another application. “That would entail a tech having to get back into his car and drive all the way back to the project site, which could be anywhere, install the application, and come all the way back. Today, we just publish the app in the central datacenter and it’s immediately available anywhere. So the Citrix-based process is much, much more efficient.”

Security

Security at the widely spread, often isolated locations was a particular concern. At one job site, burglars broke in and stole two computers. “Two years ago that would have been a major crisis, because of the sensitive and competitive information that could be compromised,” said Doige. “Now, with information centrally stored and protected, data is completely secure at all times, with the only loss being $1,000 worth of computer equipment, not our intellectual property.”

Cost savings

Over the longer term, Clark Builders will see savings in support because of the reduction in distributed IT services across dozens of locations. “We’re doing more with less,” said Doige, “because we’re moving our support efforts to the backend centralized servers rather than helping people directly with an application problem on their computer. We’re going to see definite savings there.”
Adding desktop virtualization for a more complete solution

After two years of continued success with the initial Citrix solution, Clark Builders has additional plans to further enhance its virtualization platform by implementing Citrix® XenDesktop® to take advantage of desktop virtualization. Clark currently delivers most applications directly on the XenApp platform, and is piloting XenDesktop to deliver legacy, resource demanding, and single use applications. Eventually, Clark will deliver all applications through XenDesktop.

“The new standard desktop, where it’s strictly just Citrix sessions with Citrix-delivered applications, is more seamless for the users,” said Stoik. “Many users can’t tell the applications are running remotely. So it appears more seamless as we make the conversion.”

Future

Clark is looking to establish a bring-your-own computer (BYOC) program to further leverage XenApp and XenDesktop for mobility, ease of use and user satisfaction. “The main idea came from Citrix,” said Doige. Until we implement the formal program, “We’re not really saying ‘no’ to anybody who wants to use an iPad or similar devices. We don’t want to stifle creativity. Our president will be next in line to try it, and if we can get our CEO up and running with his iPad opening Citrix apps while travelling, that would be a red-letter day for us.”

“The bottom line,” added Doige, “is that Citrix products just work. When it comes to a technology platform solution, what more needs to be said?”
About Long View Systems
Long View Systems offers flexible, end-to-end operational IT solutions for SMB to enterprise level organizations across North America. Long View’s unique insight into the distinct business requirements of its clients, along with the strong support of its manufacturing partners, results in IT infrastructures that work better and cost less. Long View is certified in the deployment and support of a broad spectrum of IT solutions and employs only the best people (more than 800 employees across North America) on the leading edge of established and emerging technologies. They work closely with clients to ensure success while providing ongoing value as part of a sustainable relationship founded on innovation and trust. For more information, please visit www.longviewsystems.com.

About Citrix
Citrix Systems, Inc. (NASDAQ:CTXS) is a leading provider of virtual computing solutions that help people work and play from anywhere on any device. More than 230,000 enterprises rely on Citrix to create better ways for people, IT and business to work through virtual meetings, desktops and datacenters. Citrix virtualization, networking and cloud solutions deliver over 100 million corporate desktops and touch 75 percent of Internet users each day. Citrix partners with over 10,000 companies in 100 countries. Annual revenue in 2010 was $1.87 billion.

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