



Faronics™

Intelligent Utilities for ABSOLUTE Control

Deep Freeze and the University of Ulster

CASE STUDY

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History

The University of Ulster's vision is to be a model of an outstanding regional university with a national and international reputation for quality. The University makes a major contribution to the economic, social, and cultural advancement of Northern Ireland as a



region within a national and international context and plays a key role in attracting inward investment. Core business activities are teaching and learning, research and technology and knowledge transfer.

The course provision is the largest in the island of Ireland covering Arts, Business and Management, Engineering, Information Technology, Life and Health Sciences, and Social Sciences. Courses have a strong vocational element and the majority include a period of industrial or professional placement.

The University has a major direct and indirect impact on the economy and community in Northern Ireland. It employs over 3,500 staff, has an annual turnover in excess of £120 million, and has embarked on a development program of £200 million over the next 10 years.

Situation

The University of Ulster is a four campus institution with over 1,500 centrally managed Windows 2000 student desktops distributed within Libraries, Learning Resource Centres, teaching rooms, and IT laboratory areas. The service is built on Novell directory services and the students log in to workstations as 'power users,' meaning they can amend aspects of the default configuration if they have the knowledge to do so, but not access files belonging to another user on the computer. Certain legitimate applications demand specific privileges that have had to be made available to users via their accounts, hence there is an increased risk of a compromised desktop by the more technically aware students. There are nine applications servers running Netware 5. The IT Staff consists of a distributed support team of seven technical staff, complemented by a team of part-time, term-time User Services Assistants (students employed on short-term contracts).

Problem

The IT staff was spending a significant amount of time dealing with operational issues principally caused by user interaction with an established desktop environment. Often these desktops had minor and major changes made to them, from altered wallpaper and browser homepages, to the deletion of files and folders or the installation of new software.

The University experienced a significant amount of downtime on these desktops, which disrupted scheduled classes and used a considerable amount of IT facilities and resources when an insufficient number of fully functional PCs were available for a particular lab.

The IT staff re-imaged desktops on a regular basis, and even between these re-imaging sessions, staff spent a large amount of time fixing problems. The re-imaging was done using Ghost, and this occupied the greater part of the time of the seven full-time technical staff.

Solution

Noel Wilson, the Assistant Director of IT User Services, heard about Deep Freeze via email. He acquired an evaluation copy and deployed it in the environment that the department wanted to use it in. The department saw very early indications of the product's value-added benefit and considered it an immediate success.

They configured the computers so that when a user logs out, it forces a restart in order for Deep Freeze to restore the machine to the desired configuration with no additional software or files on the Frozen partition. A Thawed partition is retained in order for users to have a place to save data if a restart is required during a session.

Evaluation

The University currently has Deep Freeze installed on all 1,500 of its workstations. Since the deployment of Deep Freeze, the department has seen significant increases in service uptime, with only periods of unanticipated service interruptions associated with the occasional failure of hardware components. The reduction in maintenance time has provided the opportunity for involvement in other projects within the department to improve aspects of the service and provide additional facilities. Machines are now only re-imaged to upgrade or add software as required, as well as to apply operating system updates and patches, and antivirus updates.

Using Deep Freeze coupled with the strict adoption of relevant Windows policies has made a dramatic change to the availability of the University's computers. It has also allowed the department to display the number of available machines with increased confidence — if they can see the machine on the network and a user has recently logged on to it, they know it is fully functional.

The staff are appreciative of the non-restrictive element of Deep Freeze because it gives users the flexibility to trial software, modify the desktop, and hold temporary files for the duration of their session without any disadvantage to the next user of the machine.