Case Study

Salvation Army turns to IGEL for IT to help homeless back to work

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The Salvation Army is an international Christian church working in 115 countries worldwide. As a registered charity, the Salvation Army demonstrates its Christian principles through social action and is one of the largest, most diverse providers of social welfare in the world.

Booth House, in central London, operates as a resettlement centre for up to 150 homeless men. Centre Manager Captain Howard Russell and his team provide the men with temporary hostel shelter and a stable environment with the aim of resettling residents in permanent accommodation and assisting them to find work.

IT room ready for a refresh

The IT room at the hostel is an important facility for residents to help them find work and apply for jobs as well as a connection to the outside world via the internet. But the 10 PCs in the room were regularly failing and the time taken-up in administration was rising rapidly.

The customer

- The Salvation Army's Booth House in central London
- A resettlement centre for up to 150 homeless men

"We needed to upgrade the facility and we had a number of important criteria," explained Captain Russell. "The new IT room had to be simple to set-up and administer, as cost effective as possible and secure. With many of the residents having limited IT skills, it was important to be able to lock-down the desktops to prevent anyone accidently altering the settings."

After taking advice that a thin client solution running open source, licence-free software might be a cost-effective solution for the hostel, Captain Russell googled thin clients and came up with several suppliers, including IGEL. After testing a trial unit from IGEL, Captain Howard decided that IGEL would be their preferred supplier for Booth House.

The challenge

- To upgrade the existing PC-based technology suite
- Improving reliability
- Reducing administration and costs

"The support we had from them was phenomenal," commented Captain Russell. "We are not IT experts and we had some issues setting up the system but the IGEL engineer called me on the Saturday and talked me through everything. I cannot fault the IGEL service."

Booth House IT room now has 10 IGEL LX Smart thin clients running on an open source Kubuntu Linux operating system with Open Office software applications and a Firefox web browser, all running from a central server.

"The system is very popular with our residents who are using the new facilities to improve skills. I now have very little to do to maintain it," explained Captain Russell. "When we had the PCs I was constantly in and out of the server room having to correct something, today the administration is minimal because the desktops are locked down and we just have to manage the server."

"We have greatly reduced the security risks, reduced the costs and made the facility easier to administer," commented Captain Russell. "The facility will also be easy to scale because we simply have to add another IGEL unit and monitor because the entire back-end network is already taken care of."

The solution

- IGEL LX Smart thin clients with Firefox web browser
- Server running Kubuntu Linux operating system with PXE boot

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