



CASE STUDY

Southern Housing Group

Southern Housing Group lives comfortably with IGEL thin client technology



Southern Housing Group

When Southern Housing Group wanted to update its desktop environment it turned to IGEL Technology for simplification, standardisation and value for money.

Southern Housing Group owns and manages almost 27,000 homes for more than 66,000 residents across London and the south east and is one of the largest housing associations in the region.

Employing nearly 900 people and working with more than 50 local authorities, its vision is to be a business with social objectives, which provides a range of housing options to meet a variety of housing needs.

Operating since 1901, when founder Samuel Lewis bequeathed £670,000 (equivalent to £30 million today) to provide housing for the poor, Southern Housing Group continues to build on these foundations.

THE CUSTOMER

- ▶ Southern Housing Group
- ▶ A housing association
- ▶ Almost 27,000 homes across London and the south east

Ageing IT performance demanded update

With increasingly poor performance from its ageing IT and desktop infrastructure, Southern Housing Group decided a three year IT strategy to upgrade its systems was required, beginning with a programme to reinforce and modernize its existing IT infrastructure.

“We started with a project to upgrade our ageing Citrix environment but quickly realized that we would need to also upgrade our thin client desktops, which were at least six years old,” explained Mark Lyons, Head of IT Architecture at Southern Housing Group. “The goals of the project were clear. We wanted simplification, standardisation and value for money.”

One member of the team was familiar with IGEL and recommended them, but others were not as familiar with the German thin and zero client company and at first were skeptical. They called in a range of leading manufacturers, including IGEL, and ran comparison tests and proof of concepts.

THE CHALLENGE

- ▶ Standardise desktop environment
- ▶ Simplify management
- ▶ Deliver value for money

Impressed with management suite and IGEL knowledge

“By the end of the process, we were all very impressed with the IGEL devices and in particular with the IGEL Universal Management Suite software and the flexibility and knowledge of the IGEL team,” said Mark.

The IGEL Universal Management Suite software (UMS) can be used to set-up, maintain and upgrade all IGEL thin clients from a central location using a policy-based graphical interface. It is a simple to use management tool, which can have thin clients up and running in minutes. Intuitive to use, secure and scalable up to 100,000 thin clients, the IGEL UMS drastically reduces management time for IT administrators.

Quick and seamless IGEL deployment

Southern Housing Group has now rolled out over 900 IGEL UD5 LX thin clients, with additional memory for future multimedia requirements, across multiple core offices and all its smaller facilities. The devices use Citrix XenApp 6.5 application delivery to publish core applications from the XenApp server and some over Microsoft App-V to avoid saturating the servers with applications.

Four XenApp servers are virtualised on each physical HP server to produce a scalable solution that can currently support up to 600 concurrent users. Supporting the deployment, the IT team uses Atlantis ILIO for its storage optimisation solution and Appsense Performance and Environment Manager in the VDI environment.

“The IGEL desktop change has been a key part of our wider modernisation programme but it has been by far the easiest part,” said Mark. “The roll-out was seamless and we now have around 25 PCs in use, the rest is thin client.”

THE SOLUTION

- ▶ IGEL UD5 LX
- ▶ IGEL Universal Management Suite software
- ▶ Future-proofed for multimedia use



The roll-out to the core offices took just four weeks. The IT team sent out an engineer or in some cases just delivered the IGEL devices to the smaller sites and asked the staff to plug them in. “People can plug them in themselves and they just work, as all the devices are pre-configured and the profiles are managed and updated centrally,” explained Mark. “To fulfill our simplification and standardisation brief, we use the same desktop profile throughout the organisation. The IGEL thin clients are used by everyone from the CEO through to those in our large Customer Service Centre.”

Mark added that there wasn't a single issue with the IGEL thin clients that the team couldn't solve very quickly. “In particular, the IGEL support team has been terrific. For example, we wanted to provide our users with a solution to change the resolution of their screens very simply and IGEL were quickly able to give us a very flexible fix.”

Moving forward, the IT department is considering using the IGEL thin clients to provide a richer media experience for their staff.

“The IGEL desktop refresh has been a very successful first project to underpin our modernisation programme and has fully met the brief of simplification, standardisation and value for money. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend IGEL desktops and the team,” concluded Mark.

THE BENEFITS

- ▶ Stable desktop solution for IT modernisation
- ▶ Reduced management time
- ▶ Improved user experience

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thin clients

development

services

solutions

Many functions. One device.