



Windows 7 Customer Solution Case Study



IT Consultant Saves More Time and is More Efficient With New Operating System

Overview

Country or Region: United States
Industry: IT Consulting, Professional Services

Customer Profile

District Computers is a Washington, DC-based managed services company dedicated to closing the technological divide that exists between urban, inner-city communities and their IT savvy suburban neighbors.

Business Situation

DC has three business challenges: Staying in contact with field technicians, protecting PC and mobile phone data against theft or loss, and running a more efficient and profitable consulting business.

Solution

New Windows 7 features are helping streamline workflow and communication along with keeping computers and networks more secure.

Benefits

- Jump Lists Save 15 minutes Per Day
- Deployment 50 Percent Faster
- Faster Re-install Saves 10 Hours Per Month
- Faster Problem Solving Saves 15 Hours Per Month
- Reduced Support Calls by 5 Percent

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Steve Hall, Chief Operations Officer, District Computers, LLC

District Computers, LLC, (DC) is an IT consultant that serves 100 small and medium sized businesses in the greater Washington, DC market area. The IT firm is a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner and Small Business Specialist that has been invited to participate in the Windows® 7 Professional pre-launch program called *Ignite*. Both District Computers and one of its customers are test-driving the new operating system. DC is beginning to discover features in Windows 7 that are helping to improve field technician communications, protect computers against theft or loss issues while finding better ways to streamline its own operations.



Situation

Begun in 2000, District Computers (DC), a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and Independent Software Vendor (ISV) has grown steadily in the last nine years to five core staff and up to 17 field tech contractors depending on workload. Its customer base of 100 companies is 60 percent small business users that have from 5-25 PCs, with the balance of DC's book of business being in lower mid-market companies. Though the firm's main market is within a 30-mile radius of Silver Springs, Maryland, a few customers have branch offices on the west coast.

District Computers has three major business challenges: (1) staying in contact with field technicians to know job status, (2) Protecting PC and mobile phone data against theft or loss, (3) How to run a more efficient and profitable consulting business.

"In order for my engineers to update our central trouble ticket system, they have to be online," said Hall. "Sometimes that's difficult depending on the location and how difficult it is to access customer LANs, wireless or VPN networks.

"Because so much of our sensitive data is on the road with us as we use cell phones and laptops, we are always concerned about security from loss or theft," noted Hall. "We're constantly looking for ways to protect our customer's data like it was our own.

"When you bill by the hour, your business lives or dies by the hour," commented Hall. "The more efficient we are, the more revenue we can generate. Saving just a few minutes each day at the home office or client's office helps us accomplish that goal."

Solution

District Computers is discovering several new features in Windows 7 that are helping it to

work more efficiently and effectively, internally and externally.

Snap, Shake, Peek

Snap windows side-by-side view by dragging windows to borders, left and right; shake the foremost screen to make all other screens disappear. The Peek feature is invoked by clicking on the lower right hand Show Desktop rectangle. The desktop is immediately visible to view gadgets and other desktop icons. DC engineers can navigate through documents and projects more efficiently, saving valuable time while managing costs.

Network Connection Wizard

Provides DC users with easier desktop connection to wireless, VPN and LAN networks. It means engineers can more quickly identify all network connection options within a single window.

Location Aware Printing

Automatically recognizes each new default printer as technicians move from one network to another.

Taskbar Customization

Jump Lists allow DC users to see the most recent files by right-clicking on the Taskbar. Also, right-clicking on an application icon such as Microsoft Office Word will show the most recent Word documents.

Federated Search

Searching within Windows 7, DC users have enhanced features that deepen search capabilities, essentially making Windows 7 a giant search engine scouring local PCs, HomeGroup, network, external drives, and the Internet.

Internet Explorer 8

Features within Internet Explorer 8 such as Search Suggestions, Accelerators and Slices speed up the search process by making key

word/phrase suggestions, provide ancillary services like maps using Accelerator, and track changes on favorite web sites with Slices.

Problem Steps Recorder

Enables users to record their interactions with an application or computer operation and provide a detailed screen-by-screen view with accompanying information. Problems can be more clearly communicated to DC staff and reduce help desk demands.

Power Management

Laptop batteries can last longer with power-saving features like Power Management which dim the display if an engineer hasn't used the PC for a period of time.

Advanced Backup

Easily backup any file including all local files or an entire business network.

Action Center

Consolidates alerts from 10 Windows features dealing with security and maintenance.

Benefits

More Efficient Website Monitoring

For District Computers, Internet Explorer 8 Accelerators and Slices allows its users to monitor the changes in three to four distributor websites through a single window. According to Hall, "Now product and price change information comes to me instead of having to hunt for it."

Jump Lists Save 15 Minutes Per Day

"Jump Lists in the Taskbar save each of our five techs at least 15 minutes each day," noted Hall. "Trouble ticket templates, generic letters and purchase orders are immediately available to everyone. The result is more billable time."

Improved Navigation Valued Near \$4,000

By customizing Taskbars, Jump Lists and Libraries, each DS team member has shaved 30 minutes each day off the time it takes to find client documents. "Extended over a month's time, this time savings (or available billable time) is valued at nearly \$4,000," shared Hall.

Early customer reactions to Windows 7 demos are very favorable. "Windows 7 navigation capabilities like personalized Taskbar, Jump Lists, Libraries, Snap, Shake and IE8 Accelerators and Slices are some of my customer's favorite features," said Hall.

Faster Road Connections, Reduced Support Calls by 5 Percent

"Network Connection Wizard helps reduce the amount of time it takes my techs to connect when on the road," said Hall. "Our techs stay productive and our customers stay happy. The Network Connection Wizard also reduces support calls by an estimated 5 percent since customers can solve connection problems without special IT support."

Enhanced Employee Incentives

"We've turned billable time into a tangible incentive for our employees," continued Hall. "All extra hours above a certain base become bonuses we share with the staff. Little features in Windows 7 help us to accelerate our incentive plan."

Deployment 50 Percent Faster

"Creating and deploying Windows 7 using a single USB drive image took 16 minutes per machine rather than the traditional one and a half hours for one of our employment agency clients," said Hall. "Before I could finish showing them some of the new features on my laptop, the install was done. They wanted to skip the Windows 7 beta and order the new OS today. All of us were very impressed."

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about District Computers products and services, call 202-558-5483 or visit the Web site at: www.district.computers.com

Faster Re-Install Saves 10 Hours Per Month

"Traditionally, we wipe and reload our client's computers once or twice a year to keep customer machines running well," continued Hall. "Windows 7 install process saves us 10 hours per month in time."

Faster Problem Solving Saves 15 Hours Per Month

According to Hall's estimates, Problem Steps Recorder saves District Computers 15 hours a month by creating 'how-to' documents for its clients. "My \$125 per hour techs are now more available to solve higher level problems for our clients."

"The Problem Steps Recorder allows my team to 'show' a customer through a computer problem rather than just 'talk' them through it," said Hall. "A simple slide show precisely captures each mouse click and associated screen. It makes problems easier to identify and fix."

Anticipated Migration 75 Percent

"We've been busy delivering Windows 7 demos to our small and mid-size clients and we estimate 75 percent of them are anxiously awaiting public availability. The interest and response has been terrific!"

Windows 7

Faster and more reliable: Windows 7 will help your organization use information technology to gain a competitive advantage in today's new world of work. Your people will be able to be more productive anyway. You will be able to support your mobile work force with better access to shared data and collaboration tools. And your IT staff will have better tools and technologies to enhance corporate IT security, data protection, and more efficient deployment and management.

For more information about Windows 7, go to: www.microsoft.com/windows/business

Software and Services

- Products
 - Microsoft Windows 7 Professional
 - Microsoft Windows Vista Professional
 - Microsoft Office 2007 Professional
 - Windows Small Business Server 2008

Hardware

- Lenovo
- HP