

CASE STUDY

VDI Vision Becomes a Reality at Equity Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Equity Bank is entrepreneurial at heart. Recognizing the value proposition of a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI), the bank went in search of a tool that would enable it to turn this vision into a reality. The team found the solution in FSLogix. The VDI solution eliminates many of the problems the bank had with its Citrix XenApp environment, while enabling it to continue to scale through acquisitions and organic growth without any hindrance from its desktop environment.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > 600 and 1,200 hours annually in time savings and productivity gains for 300 employees
- > At least 1,500 hours in annual time savings and productivity gains for “roaming” tellers
- > Several hundred hours in time savings previously imaging desktops and laptops
- > Dramatically simplified license tracking and provisioning

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Equity Bank Overview

- > Founded in 2002
- > Headquartered in Wichita, Kansas
- > \$1.5B Assets
- > 29 Branches in Kansas and Missouri
- > Publicly Traded on NASDAQ Under EQBK
- > Motto: “We Never Forget It’s Your Money”

Challenges

- > Eliminate time spent managing images on individual desktops and laptops
- > Scale to accommodate further acquisitions and growth
- > Allow users to see and download only those applications for which they are authorized
- > Shrink log-on time for VDI and XenApp environment

Solution

- > Unified Base Image Management and Profile Containers powered by FSLogix Apps
- > Citrix XenDesktop and XenApp supporting IGEL Thin Clients, standard desktops and laptops, and tablets

Doing big things is at the heart of Equity Bank. It was a guiding principle when Chairman and CEO Brad Elliott acquired the bank’s first branch in Andover, Kansas, with \$30 million in capital in 2002. It is evident in how the bank treats its employees and serves the local communities in which it operates through its “I CARE!” company values. It is embodied in the bank’s innovative “Napkin Stories” that showcase entrepreneurs—including bank employees and entrepreneurial customers—by telling their stories of success.

VDI FROM DAY ONE

This same entrepreneurial approach also extends to how Equity Bank is run. It was top of mind when Tyler Miranda joined the bank five years ago as an IT systems administrator charged with managing the bank’s growing inventory of desktop and laptop systems.

Recognizing the bank’s rapid growth trajectory and how this would continue to introduce increasing complexity to its desktop infrastructure, Miranda, who is now assistant vice president-IT systems administration, had migration to a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) as his top objective from day one. “VDI is something that I’ve wanted to do since the day I stepped foot in the bank,” Miranda describes. “But moving 150 different applications over to a single image simple wasn’t within the realm of possibility—that is, until we found and implemented FSLogix.”

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CHALLENGES OF VIRTUAL APPLICATION DELIVERY PLATFORM

But Miranda was not to be thwarted in turning his vision a reality. The desktop environment Miranda inherited consisted of Windows-based desktops. When Equity Bank started to upgrade those systems to Windows 7, Miranda concluded that an architectural change was required. “We were constantly updating and patching the systems, and this complexity was only going to increase,” Miranda says. “For example, we typically undertake one acquisition annually, expanding our inventory of desktops as well as number of applications.”

In early 2015, Miranda and Equity Bank’s IT team embarked on an initiative to migrate a portion of the desktop population over to IGEL Thin Clients running the Linux operating system. Other users remain on desktops, while most executives are allocated laptops and tablets. Miranda explains the rationale behind the decision to manage all of the bank’s applications from a single image: “We’re able to continue to grow through acquisitions by simplifying how we manage our data center and more-over moving distributed systems and applications into the data center.”

But a move to a VDI environment was still not possible. Miranda explains: “Many of our 150 applications are used by one or two employees. Our security policies mandate that application access be restricted to only those employees who are authorized users. Without FSLogix, there simply isn’t a way to prevent all users from seeing and accessing all of the applications residing within the consolidated image.”

One alternative would have been to create multiple images containing applications authorized per groups of users, but this was completely

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infeasible. “We have a total of five IT staff,” Miranda states. “We simply don’t have the resources to manage more than one unified application image. With XenApp only, we frequently had to tell departments and employees ‘no’ when they requested that we add new applications.”

MAKING VDI A REALITY

While Miranda initially was interested in FSLogix for profile container management, he soon pinpointed that its layering capabilities was the real answer he sought. “We created multiple application containers and overlaid those with profiles for our 300-plus users,” Miranda explains. “We then configured one unified base image for all applications and expose only those applications that users are authorized to see and use.”

Migration to Citrix XenDesktop and FSLogix Apps and Profile Containers began early this year. “We ran a proof of concept to validate the solution on several use cases,” Miranda says. “The results were precisely what we wanted, and we made a final decision to move to a 100-percent VDI environment a little more than a month ago pending some hardware infrastructure upgrades.”

Miranda is currently in the early process of his VDI migration and has about 10 percent of his total desktop, laptops, thin clients, and tablets using VDI. “We hope to migrate the remainder of our systems to VDI by the end of the year,” he reports. The solution gives us the ability to support the bank’s continued growth and acquisition strategy without adding more IT resources. We’re not trying to plan for 400 users, but rather for 1,500 users. This is an important driving factor behind our VDI initiative.”

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AVOIDING THE UNNECESSARY SOFTWARE LICENSE COSTS

One of the areas where Miranda is seeing immediate returns is licensing management. "We had a big challenge with our Adobe Acrobat licensing with the XenApp deployment," he says. "There was no easy way to control who had access to the Acrobat PDF printer or to the "Edit in Acrobat" Explorer context menu. Each time this happened, we technically acquired an additional license of Adobe Acrobat that we possibly didn't want for that user."

The same scenario played out involving Adobe Photoshop. "Our marketing department uses Adobe Creative Suite, but this is a very small subset of our total user population," Miranda notes. "However, whenever someone would double click on a .PSD file, this would result in the consumption of a Photoshop license. All of these license consumptions add up and become a growing expenditure over time."

SHRINKING LOG-ON TIMES

Before the move to VDI and the combined Citrix XenDesktop and FSLogix solution, Miranda and his team used Citrix's user profile management in XenApp for user profile management. But the time required for staff to log into their systems was too long. "Users typically experienced anywhere between 45 and 90 seconds just to get into their Citrix session," Miranda recalls. "This was unacceptable and a significant productivity drain for us." This amounts to between 600 and 1,200 hours annually in time savings.¹

While Miranda has the auto-disconnect timer in Citrix set for four hours on most systems in the bank, and thus those users only need to log into their VDI instance once per day, the IGEL Thin Clients used by tellers in the different branches are configured differently. "Tellers roam between the different thin clients throughout the day and need to log on and off

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between 5 and 10 times daily, for not all of the banks peripherals support session roaming," Miranda explains. "For these 60 or 70 employees, the differences in log-on times with XenApp versus XenDesktop and FSLogix are substantial." For tellers alone, time savings reach nearly 1,500 hours annually.²

OFFICE 365—AND MORE

Equity Bank sees other benefits from the VDI solution. "We're currently managing our Microsoft Office environment on our own server farm," Miranda observes. "But Office 365 is something we're looking at. Without FSLogix, we probably wouldn't have this option on the table, as Office 365 sees a significant performance degradation in a VDI environment. FSLogix caches it locally and resolves this issue."

VDI with FSLogix and IGEL Thin Clients also give Equity Bank a more stable workspace environment. "Our helpdesk team spends less time reimaging and rebuilding desktops and laptops," Miranda says. "They simply power each of them on and send over a command, and they are ready to go within two minutes of being activated." It previously took Miranda and his team an hour or more to image individual desktops and laptops. With VDI fully in place, this will translate into several hundred hours of time savings.

Acquisition transitions to the Equity Bank IT infrastructure will be a more seamless process, too. "There are different regulations in the banking industry that require full system migration between business days," Miranda explains. "Before, when we would bring an acquired bank onto the Equity Bank network, we typically spent an entire weekend working days and nights to have everything ready for the opening of business on Monday. With VDI and FSLogix, we anticipate this timeframe will shrink to several hours."

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“WISHING” UPON FSLOGIX

Miranda stresses that he cannot overemphasize the importance of FSLogix in making his strategic vision a reality. “VDI wasn’t an option for us without FSLogix,” he accentuates. “While VDI was at the top of my wish list, I never thought it would happen due to our large number of applications and small IT staff.”

Yet, once Equity Bank embarked on its VDI journey, there was no turning back—and no regrets on the part of Miranda. “The experience in working with FSLogix is the best that I’ve ever had in working with a vendor—from sales, to presales support, to post-sales support,” he concludes.

RESOURCES

¹The calculation assumes 250 workdays annually. Calculation (assumes 30 seconds saved per day for each user): 300 Staff X .5 Minute in Time Saved Daily X 250 Workdays / 60 Minutes Per Hour = 625 Hours Annually.

²The calculation assumes 250 workdays annually. Calculation (assumes 30 seconds saved per day for each user and a total of 10 log-in sessions daily): 300 Staff X .5 Minutes in Time Saved Per Log-on Session X 10 Log-on Sessions Daily X 250 Workdays Annually / 60 Minutes Per Hour = 1,460 Hours Annually.

ABOUT FSLOGIX

FSLogix is a leading innovator of solutions that enable the enterprise virtual workspace, reducing the amount of hardware, time and labor required to support cloud and virtual desktops. FSLogix Apps seamlessly integrates with desktop virtualization solutions from Microsoft, Citrix, VMware, and other industry leaders. The company is headquartered in Atlanta, GA, with offices in Orem, UT and Chelmsford, Essex, UK. For more information, visit www.fslogix.com.