

Client Management

HOW PROFESSIONALS DISTRIBUTE SOFTWARE TODAY

Since the beginning of 2009 Unitymedia from Cologne have been administering around 2,000 workstations with DX-Union from MATERNA. The advantages: with the client management solution new software packages can be created conveniently and quickly. DX-Union provides a uniform administration interface and integrated inventorying.

Unitymedia provisions approximately 4.6 million people in North Rhine-Westphalia and Hessen with media and telecommunications services. The Cologne company is one of the leading providers of so-called triple play services and supplies a quickly growing number of customers with high speed internet, flat rate telephoning and digital television all from one source. At the company's eleven locations, around 1,600 staff regularly have to be supplied with new software for their workplace PCs. As the support for the previously used client management solution was discontinued the company had to look around for an alternative.

“In addition to that, our strong growth with new services made even more demands on the client management which were difficult to achieve with the legacy solution,” explains Markus Lecke, Teamleader IT Support at Unitymedia. A uniform administration interface was clearly lacking. Unitymedia had also

contracted an external service provider for some of the tasks in client management and they wanted to get these tasks back for themselves. So the Unitymedia administrators were to create software packages on their own again – a significant requirement for the new solution. Packaging and scripting options thus played an important role when the tool was chosen. DX-Union was able to convince them with functions like the Driver Wizard and Robot. The solution also provides freely editable installation scripts which ensure flexibility when creating packages.

“At the end of 2008 we decided on DX-Union with the modules for software management, patch management, inventorying and DX-Union Robot and migrated to the new solution in February 2009,” Markus Lecke tells us. Membrain were our sales partner on this.



Creating software packages quickly and easily

The IT support at Unitymedia is based in Cologne. IT administrators also work at all the company's larger locations. The installation consists of a master server in Kerpen and six further slave servers which run under Windows Server 2003 R2. The important software management tasks are provided by the team in Bochum. These include scripting and testing as well as the distribution of the software packages.

On average there are 70 different software packages which the IT support has to have available and distribute at any one time. These include for example packages for Windows XP, the Office Suite, the CRM system as well as specialist application software for measuring devices. 10 to 15 percent of them are deployed for special areas, the rest of the software packages are standard for all users.

Unitymedia used the Migration Tool SLD2DXU for the changeover to the new client management solution. This enables computer objects, software package datasets and depot contents to be taken over easily and gently from LiveState Delivery into the DX-Union system. New scripting of the old software packages is currently being carried out in a second step so as to make full use of the many new opportunities offered by DX-Union.

Automation is the target

At the moment the most time-intensive part of automated software distribution is the creation and testing of software packages. DX-Union has its Package Wizard for this and it can simplify these processes considerably. "We regularly test new drivers, hardware and software, update software packages and have to rollout new software on the clients. Equipping the clients is an ongoing process," Michael Kötting, System Administrator at Unitymedia, explains. DX-Union provides routines for this such as the freely editable installation scripts. These make creating packages and then installing them very flexible. For the automation of keyboard entries and mouse activities during the creation of

software packages Unitymedia also uses the DX-Union Robot. DX-Union Robot contains a suggestions list from which the administrator can choose the desired commands for each action which are then transferred into the script. With the Driver Wizard hardware drivers can be quickly integrated in the operating system installations. The drivers are fully recognised during operating system installation which means manual administration becomes unnecessary. Unitymedia can also integrate new drivers for all operating systems supported by Windows and the appropriate Windows PE Boot Image by itself so they are not dependent on support from MATERNA.

Unitymedia also use the Asset Assistant for inventorying hardware and software. So the IT support can, for example, carry out evaluations about equipment for end devices. This was not possible with the old client management solution. Now they are equipped like this, Unitymedia can combine the topic of licence management with their client management and also use the existing information for licence administration in future.

Stable solution and competent support

The new system is stable and Unitymedia is very satisfied with DX-Union: "The solution is easy to operate so we were able to install around 1,200 clients in the first three days of the migration. Today it takes about two hours to equip a new member of staff with a fully functioning PC," says Michael Kötting. "The support from MATERNA is also very competent and fast."

Unitymedia can also benefit from some more advantages: behaviour during the maintenance window has improved, performance when allocating software to a large number of PCs has been optimised and negative dependencies during software installation are now taken into account.

Unitymedia is now also well equipped for a changeover to Windows 7 which is planned for 2011 as DX-Union already supports the new Microsoft operating system. ■



TRAINING

As part of the migration project the IT administrators from Unitymedia also took part in a three day DX-Union training programme. With the scripting training as a foundation, the administrators can now carry out a lot of the tasks by themselves. "The training took place in small groups so that we could discuss problems in our daily work very well. For example we brought our own software packages with us and could practice on them," Markus Lecke explains. Unitymedia consciously only took part in the basic training after the first three months so participants could ask clearly targeted questions which had arisen during their work: for example the use of evaluations and reporting during inventorying.

ADVANTAGES

- Uniform administration interface
- Intuitive administration dashboard
- Simple to create software packages
- Fully automated driver recognition during operating system installation without any manual administration
- Integrated inventorying
- Efficient import of all necessary PC and software packages from the old software management tool

THE COMPANY

Unitymedia, which has its headquarters in Cologne, Germany, is the biggest cable network provider in North Rhine-Westphalia and Hessen as well as the third largest cable network provider, as far as TV subscribers are concerned, in Europe. Hessen and North Rhine-Westphalia form the most densely populated economic regions in Germany. Around a third of Germany's GDP is generated here. In addition to providing analogue cable TV services Unitymedia is also a leading provider of integrated triple play services which are responsible for the growth in the fields of digital cable television, broadband internet and telephoning. On 30 June 2009 Unitymedia had around 4.6 million basic cable customers, 469 thousand digital pay TV (RGU) subscribers, 802 thousand internet subscribers (RGU) and 490 thousand telephone customers.