

CASE IN PRINT

DecisionOne Minimizes Costs for LCDS High-speed Printing over TCP/IP

Think of the last time you called a helpdesk for assistance or requested authorized service on your major brand name computer or mobile phone. The individual that answered your call was likely not an employee of the major brand company; in fact, they may have been an employee of DecisionOne. More and more companies are outsourcing their help desk and support functions

to organizations that specialize in providing professional technology support at a more affordable cost.

Headquartered in the Philadelphia suburb of Frazer, Pennsylvania, DecisionOne is one of the

largest third-party providers of tailored information technology support. The services allow their customers to focus on their core competencies, not on their hardware support requirements. Leading companies and government agencies rely on DecisionOne's OneSource solutions to supply the coverage, availability, and response to satisfy the technology support needs of their clients' employees and customers.

ENVIRONMENT

Printing is an important means to communicate invoicing, pricing changes, and other reports used by DecisionOne and its clients. With more than 4,000 technology professionals and geographically distributed service locations, the company utilizes a mixed computing environment with remotely outsourced mainframes. For years, DecisionOne's printing operation has relied on the use of expensive channel extenders to connect the high-speed LCDS printers in their print center to the remote mainframes.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DecisionOne, a leading IT support services provider, upgraded their networks to TCP/IP and implemented an LRS® solution to replace a costly channel extender based printing environment. DecisionOne concluded that the VPS/TCP/IP and VPS/LCDS solution provided both high-speed printing support and a cost effective way to manage their output between their corporate Xerox printing operation and their mainframe outsourcer.

The Hyperchannel solution has been in use since the days when DecisionOne was primarily a mainframe-computing environment; today it is used solely to connect their remote mainframe data and corporate print server with attached Xerox printers.

Recently, the company upgraded to a TCP/IP network including lines between their outsourcer and corporate print center. TCP/IP enabled fast and versatile connectivity to their mid-range machines, online web users, and remaining environment. Only their corporate printers were unable to take advantage of the high-speed TCP/IP connectivity.

THE NEED TO ELIMINATE REDUNDANT HARDWARE

Competition within the technology support market is fierce and leaders like DecisionOne must keep finding ways to decrease their operating costs to remain competitive. Initiatives like the TCP/IP network upgrade must save money while increasing capability. As the Hyperchannel solution was solely in

"In one month, the LRS solution was installed, trialed, and running in production. With the TCP/IP network in place, VPS/TCPIP and VPS/LCDS paid for themselves in just two months." — Rick Milanak

use to support printing, they planned to better utilize their new large capacity TCP/IP network and reduce the cost of corporate printing while still supporting peak usages. Rick Milanak, IT Support Services Manager with DecisionOne, is responsible for managing DecisionOne's corporate print center, including four operators and an overall monthly volume of 420,000 pages. Their monthly Xerox LCDS print requirements include a variety of reports, pricing changes, and two large volume invoice runs. Although some of the printed reports are used internally, a majority of DecisionOne's printing is sent directly to its clients.

Mr. Milanak emphasized, "Our existing channel extender solution worked fine, but was expensive to support and some of that hardware became redundant with the new TCP/IP backbone. As part of our TCP/IP migration, we wanted to minimize costs associated with the obsolete Token Ring network and Hyperchannel (channel extender) hardware."

CHALLENGING MISCONCEPTIONS

In order to achieve DecisionOne's cost reduction targets, Milanak's team researched the possibility of using the TCP/IP backbone to deliver their mainframe data to their high-speed Xerox printers. They proposed to eliminate the redundant network hardware while also reducing the number of printers. They now were challenged to find a solution that would handle the LCDS data stream and guarantee delivery over the new TCP/IP backbone to their high-speed printers. They were aware that mainframe based TCP/IP printing is not always as foolproof as channel printing. They also knew that it was not easy to deliver the LCDS data stream over TCP/IP while retaining Xerox printer compatibility.

As a satisfied VPS® customer, Milanak was quick to consider VPS/LCDS and VPS/TCPIP as a potential solution for managing and delivering the LCDS data stream from a remote mainframe to a Xerox-compatible print server (Solimar Print/Director) over TCP/IP. He discussed the proposal with his outsourcer as well as the Solimar print server technicians. The outsourcer did not think this was a viable solution and counter-proposed a proprietary spool product to send LCDS data to the printer through use of an exit.

Milanak challenged each proposed solution vendor to provide more information and implementation details. The proprietary spool product vendor did not reply. Milanak noted that, "Within a week, system engineers from LRS' Enterprise Document Engineering group provided a clearly defined project plan to assist us in planning how to get the job done. We consulted with our staff and outsourcers to get feedback on the LRS plan. Within days, LRS responded with answers to our questions and concerns. We were comfortable with the proposed solution and requested a trial."

LRS responded quickly to customer concerns. The LRS marketing representative, system engineers, and sales manager all worked together with Xerox, Solimar, and the outsourcer to help DecisionOne coordinate a successful trial, migration, and results. "No other vendor has been more cooperative or offered any greater level of support or information than LRS did," says Milanak.

IMPLEMENTING THE SOLUTION

The DecisionOne implementation and setup was coordinated with LRS, Xerox, Solimar, and outsourcing professionals. According to

Milanak, "If we ever had a problem, LRS called us back within an hour. They were great."

With the trial decision made, the LRS solution installed easily and performed well. Milanak points out, "At the same time, we also upgraded our operating system from OS390 R2.9 to zOS 1.2. We knew that upgrading an operating system could complicate things, but the LRS products worked without fail." With the Solimar print server connected to VPS using TCP/IP, the VPS/LCDS printer definition handled translation and carriage control processing.

DecisionOne extensively tested each form and report to validate exact reproduction using their high-speed Xerox printers. For each test, VPS/LCDS flawlessly handled the data stream and layout with exact precision, while VPS/TCPIP delivered the data stream from their outsourcer's mainframes over the TCP/IP backbone without incident. The VPS/TCPIP solution guarantees delivery and can utilize repositioning and restart check-pointing. During the trial, the proprietary spool product suffered technical difficulties. "Nothing performed even close to VPS/TCPIP and VPS/LCDS," stated Milanak.

GETTING RESULTS

Within a month, the LRS solution was proposed, installed, trialed, and running in production at DecisionOne. Milanak estimated, "With the TCP/IP network in place, this solution paid for itself in just two months." Considering how well VPS/LCDS handled the LCDS data stream, how effectively VPS/TCPIP assured delivery to TCP/IP destinations, and the cooperation throughout the project, LRS had helped DecisionOne reduce costs as well as ensure print integrity. Milanak and the operators also noticed how much faster the jobs were now transferred and queued for printing. As a result, there is also a reduced potential for data loss due to a network interruption.

The LRS output management solution seamlessly dropped into the DecisionOne operation. Print operator Chihoon Yang affirms: "The new solution works faster without changing how I perform my job. For an operator, this means no need for additional training or extra tasks to perform."

Milanak noted that with the LRS Enterprise Output Management solution in place, DecisionOne had the control needed to better manage its printing operation and use one less printer to handle all regular and peak period printing.

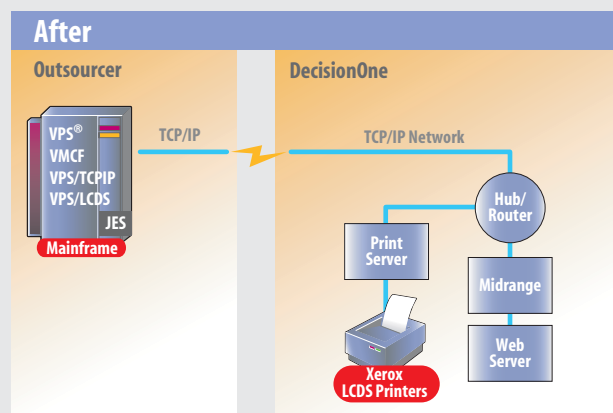
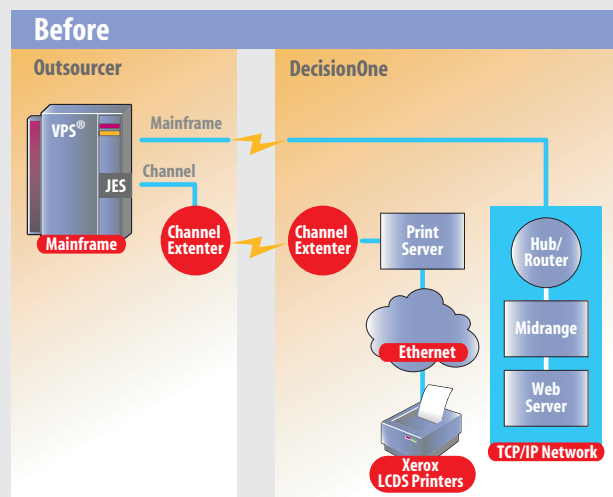
LRS[®] Solution

DecisionOne implemented the LRS solution for routing mainframe report and forms output to LCDS high-speed printers connected over TCP/IP. With a TCP/IP network in place, this solution facilitated replacing Token Ring and channel extender networks. The solution consisted of VPS[®] and VPS/TCPIP, VPS/LCDS, and VMCF.

VPS and **VPS/TCPIP** route output to numerous network destinations, including printers, email, fax servers, and web browsers.

VPS/LCDS delivers Xerox data streams to network-attached high-speed Xerox printers.

VMCF is an interface to monitor and control the LRS Enterprise Output Server (TSO 3270 client used; web client is also available).



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