

Emory University

A Study in Powerful Provisioning



Located just 15 minutes from downtown Atlanta, Emory University is a top-ranked teaching and research institution, with the largest and most comprehensive health care system in Georgia. The university's close proximity to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Arthritis Foundation, CARE, the American Cancer Society, and the Carter Foundation provides an ideal setting for hands-on research and collaboration with some of the world's leading public health agencies and the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory.

At Emory's Rollins School of Public Health, students learn to identify, analyze, and intervene in today's most pressing public health issues. When the school researched and evaluated solutions for provisioning its computer systems with the technology tools critical to its teaching, research and development efforts, it decided on LANDesk® Management Suite. As a result, the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University reduced user interaction required for provisioning from four hours to five minutes, saving more than 100 personnel-hours per update of every 100 machines.

Business Needs

- Provide a higher level of service to users through increased uptime, decreased user interruptions, faster responses to application requests and better overall client interaction.

Solution

- LANDesk® Management Suite

Business Benefits

- Provisioned new applications in minutes rather than months, including saving more than 100 personnel-hours on an update to over 100 machines.
- Simplified desktop image management by reducing required image size from 4GB to 500MB, as well as eliminated the need to create new images every time a new update or configuration change is required.
- Reduced the user interaction time required to provision a new machine from four hours to five minutes.
- Enabled users to receive updates uninterrupted and free up IT resources for client mentoring on how to better leverage new technologies.

Higher Standard of Service

When the IT team at the Rollins School of Public Health looked for a solution that could help it better manage and provision the school's computers, the team's primary objective was to find a way to deliver the highest level of customer service to its users. "As we evaluated different vendors' solutions, the impact that the solution would have on our internal clients was always at the forefront of our consideration," says Anne Vail, associate director of client services at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University. "That's exactly what sold us on LANDesk® Management Suite. If our clients need a new application or update, they can get it in minutes rather than waiting three to four days. We can provision hundreds of machines overnight instead of spending four months like we used to do. We're a small shop supporting a really large school, and for us the benefits of LANDesk are huge."

Streamlined Provisioning

One of the most exciting benefits that LANDesk® Management Suite provides the Rollins School of Public Health is what the solution delivers in terms of provisioning. When Vail first started working at Rollins a little over a year ago, the school lacked an effective means to make sure its systems were provisioned in a consistent manner. Computers that had been purchased at the same time were often configured differently, depending on who had happened to deploy them.

To improve its provisioning efforts, the school created a standard image for all of its desktops. But since the image didn't provide the IT team a way to add or make changes on the fly, the image had to contain about 30 different applications that its intended users might possibly need. As a result, the image was bloated at 4GB and extremely difficult to maintain. Any OS updates or application changes required the creation of a new image.

"Maintaining images used to be exhausting," Vail says. "It would take one of our people a whole day just to get an image ready before a deployment, and if something changed or didn't work, he'd have to start the whole process all over again to make a new image."

LANDesk Management Suite enabled Rollins to improve, simplify and standardize its provisioning efforts. "LANDesk has enabled us to really streamline our processes," Vail says. "Before a machine ever comes out of the box we follow our naming conventions to give it a PC name. We enter

that name and its MAC address in the LANDesk® console and assign it a provisioning task. Once the machine is connected to the network, it PXE boots, LANDesk discovers it, and its assigned provisioning process begins.”

This new streamlined process makes use of customized provisioning templates and a single 500MB baseline OS image. The templates drive the provisioning process, pushing out OS updates and dictating what applications to deploy based on user type. “Most of our provisioning templates script out software installations,” says Billy Nelson, LANDesk administrator at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University. “We have different templates for different machines with different drivers. We also have a template that creates the partition, formats the hard drive, deploys the OS image and installs the latest OS updates. It runs through the mini setup and Sysprep, names the PC and puts it on the domain. It makes my life a lot easier.”

One of the main ways it makes life easier at Rollins is in timesavings. “Before LANDesk we used to spend three to four hours sitting at a new computer to provision it,” Nelson says. “With LANDesk provisioning, once you have your template, you only spend five to 10 minutes at the machine and you can leave to work on other duties. When you come back an hour later, the machine is ready to go. When you start to multiply the number of computers that you need to put out in a week, that’s a huge savings. It also frees up a lot of man-hours that we can now gear towards supporting our end users and showing them how to better use technology.”

Automated Change Management

In addition to outfitting new computers, LANDesk provisioning plays a key role in the area of change management and application updates for Rollins. When application or OS updates become available, the school just adds a simple script to its template to accommodate the update rather than having to create a new master image like it did previously. Also, if the school rolls out an update that happens to cause a problem, it can easily roll it back with LANDesk provisioning.

Provisioning with LANDesk® Management Suite also simplifies and automates the entire upgrade process, as exemplified in a recent project undertaken by the school to update its antivirus services. “Even though we had several separate steps in our AV rollout, LANDesk provisioning gave us the opportunity to do it all in one job,” Nelson says. “We updated 111 machines in our first phase. Normally it would have taken an hour per machine, but we were able to do the whole job with LANDesk in a little over two hours. LANDesk is probably the best desktop management software that I’ve ever had the honor of working with. You can do so much more with it than you can with any other application out there.”

“But the biggest benefit was that we could run the job at night when it didn’t affect any of our users,” Vail adds. “If we had to do the updates during the day, we’d have to schedule time with the faculty, which would have extended the project by months. With LANDesk, our users enjoy the uptime and don’t lose any work.”

“I’ve been doing IT and helpdesk client support for over 10 years and have used a lot of very good tools, but none of those provide the level of detail, control and accuracy that LANDesk affords us,” Vail says. “The ROI for LANDesk provisioning is huge. Tasks that took days and weeks to do before, now take minutes. Our users can work uninterrupted. They can get software on demand. Our whole team can now be proactive and devote more time to helping our clients leverage new technologies to improve their work. That has tremendous value that you really can’t measure.”



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