

Customer story

Government

PowerTerm® WebConnect delivers browser based emulation to Cumbria County Council, UK

“ We chose to use a Web-to-host solution because we were confident that it would simplify the management of the desktop for us and make access to the applications more consistent for the Council's users. PowerTerm WebConnect is delivering on all of those benefits and more. ”

Jonathan Hammond
Unix Applications Support Team Leader,
Cumbria County Council



BACKGROUND

Cumbria Information Systems (CIS) delivers corporate IT services to Cumbria County Council, one of England's largest counties. CIS' Jonathan Hammond (Unix Applications Support Team Leader) and his team provide installation, support and consulting to the Council's many and varied departments.

The Council operates a devolved management structure for its IT systems, meaning that departments can choose the management system that best suits their needs, combining centralized and self management. Hammond gives the examples of one department that opts to use desktop applications hosted on the central server while they host a specially developed application on their own server, and another department that chooses to locate all of its applications centrally. CIS has used emulation programs to provide user-access to the software hosted on the Council mainframes for some years.

INDUSTRY

Government

CUSTOMER

Cumbria County Council

HOST CONNECTIVITY SOLUTION

PowerTerm® WebConnect

HOST SERVER

Sun Solaris Unix E5500

USERS

450 users throughout Cumbria County Council

CHALLENGE

Cumbria County Council needed a Web-based emulation solution to deliver software applications to its staff across one of England's largest counties.

SOLUTION

Using PowerTerm WebConnect, the Cumbria Information Systems team can host and manage software applications on a single Sun Solaris at its Carlisle offices with access to its users across the County. PowerTerm WebConnect has allowed the Council to centralize the management of their host connectivity solution, reducing desktop support and improving the management of their IT systems.

BENEFITS

- PowerTerm WebConnect offers superior features in terms of control over user activity, communication with users and ease of installation and configuration.
- PowerTerm WebConnect also proved to be the most cost-effective solution.



MOVING TO WEB EMULATION

The CIS decision to upgrade its mainframe server prompted a review of the Council's host connectivity requirements. The proprietary emulation program that had been written for the old ICL VME mainframe could not be used with the new Sun Solaris E5500. After careful consideration of alternative emulation solutions, including traditional Windows-based terminal emulation, they decided that Web-based emulation was a natural choice. In a geographically large county, the centralized server set-up would reduce travel and therefore costs by minimizing the on-site desktop support required. Reduced support commitments would allow staff to focus on the task of managing the applications themselves.

PowerTerm WebConnect provides two built-in solutions, each one optimized for LAN (Active X) or WAN (JAVA) access. Via a browser, users simply access a URL, eliminating the need to install software and user configurations on individual desktops. If a new version is released, you only need to update the central server and all users will automatically get the latest release. PowerTerm WebConnect also allows administrators to use session shadowing and instant private messaging to provide immediate assistance to any remote/mobile user on-line and in real-time.

The decision to use a Web-based emulation package was influenced by new legislation requiring local

government services to be online by 2005. "We are very conscious of our plans to get all of Cumbria County Council's services online within the next 4 years," says Hammond. "It's important that the systems we are installing now are compatible with our future requirements."

CHOOSING A WEB EMULATION PACKAGE

When it came time to assess emulation packages, the CIS team broke into two groups, one appraising the software from the users' perspective, and the other from the administrators' perspective. The user group assessed the packages on the desktop and found that Ericom's PowerTerm WebConnect outshone its competitors because it was intuitive to use and provided a greater number of useful functions. "Of the three packages we looked at, Ericom's solution certainly had the better user facilities and was the easiest to interact with."

A second group compared PowerTerm WebConnect and its competitors from the perspective of the CIS staff who would maintain the software. "PowerTerm WebConnect offered superior features in terms of control over user activity, communication with users and ease of installation and configuration," said Hammond.

INSTALLING POWERTERM WEBCONNECT

Installing PowerTerm WebConnect could not have been easier, says Hammond. "Ericom has made the installation of PowerTerm

WebConnect straightforward and intuitive. The most time-consuming part of the whole process was entering user names onto the system."

Hammond says that Ericom's support has been another of its strengths. "When we initially went live we experienced some problems at the server end, where the server was creating a bottle-neck and slowing messages. We called the local Ericom office and they immediately worked with us to find a solution. By the end of the day they had talked us through a simple reconfigure and everything ran smoothly."

THE BENEFITS

Because PowerTerm WebConnect is server-based, it enables administrators to eliminate user error as a factor in application problems, making problem solving simpler. Hammond says, "We can assume that from the desktop, users can communicate with the application, so any problems they are experiencing are with the applications themselves. We can concentrate on the applications themselves and generally don't have to worry about PCs. The IT department is continuously being asked to do more with less. Clearly, the less time we need to spend on desktop support, the more time we can spend on developing and managing the applications and addressing the future needs of the Council's IT requirements. It's a simple equation, but it means that we can offer better services to the Council and to our users."



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