Case Study
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Faronics Deep Freeze
and Skywest Airlines

Situation

SkyWest Inc. is the airline service parent company that is comprised of both the SkyWest Airlines division based in Utah, and the Express Jet Airlines division out of Atlanta.

The company also maintains partnerships with some of the leading global airline carriers including United Airlines, Delta Air Lines, US Airways and American Airlines. In total, SkyWest oversees 334 aircraft and 10,500 aviation professionals making more than 1,700 daily flights. ExpressJet operates an additional 400 aircraft, 9000 employees and 2,200 daily flights. The company leverages about 700 computers in both the airline divisions, which are also used for recording aircraft maintenance and training sessions.

The computers are housed within the training labs, in scattered kiosk sites throughout airports as well as in crew lounge areas, to provide Internet access for employees between flights. However, most of the computers are kept on mobile carts in airline hangars for use by the maintenance crew who require constant access to the Web-based recording tools to account for upkeep and repair processes. The carts include computers, printers and scanners for maintenance purposes.

In total, the computers are utilized by SkyWest's 20,000 employees, 80% of whom are crew members like the maintenance personnel.

Problem

"Mechanics are not computer scientists so they were pretty rough on the machines." - Michael Howes

SkyWest experienced several issues within their technological infrastructure before implementing Deep Freeze Enterprise, Faronic's reboot to restore solution for the enterprises, on its 700 computers, including maintenance challenges and problems with their previously utilized system.

Before deploying Deep Freeze, the company had Microsoft Steady State installed on its fleet of computers. The former system was implemented on the PCs in crew lounges but not on the ones utilized by the maintenance crew.

Michael Howes, a SkyWest desktop application support technician, said the organization faced several obstacles involving the support of computers used by repair and maintenance personnel.

These employees needed fast access to the maintenance recording software and utilized the machines in this capacity. However, this strategy sometimes required the upkeep and maintenance of computers if users experienced an issue. Often when these events occurred, the airline had to physically send someone from the IT team to the location, incurring expenditures in travel costs.

Also, considerable time was being spent flying to the site of the problem and waiting for arrangements to return home.

Adding to these issues was the fact that the previous restore solution did not have very good remote capabilities and making changes to the computers was difficult. IT technicians were not able to connect to different workstations from a single interface. This compounded travel expenses each time mechanics reported a problem on their system, which required an IT member to fly to a hangar and repair the issue in person.

The lack of remote supervision capabilities also created challenges for managers. If they wanted to change settings on a specific computer, they had to rely on the IT team to walk them through the adjustment process or physically travel to the location themselves. Before deploying Deep Freeze, the airline found they had to send IT technicians to fix computers at least once or twice a week or go through the costly and inconvenient process of shipping a PC into the IT department to be repaired and shipped back.

The company also experienced problems when computer systems required updates. As many airline locations need to be online and running at all hours of the day and night, the organization could not shut down a group of computers at a single time for updating. Instead, they needed a system that would allow them to stagger these updates to align with downtime in the hangars. This would prevent mechanics from being able to access the maintenance recording software at peak hours.

'The lack of Remote Management capabilities in Windows steady state was also a major bottleneck.'

Solution

Due to the challenges being faced with the previously utilized restore system, SkyWest administrators decided it was time to seek a better solution that would provide remote management capabilities and improved desktop management. During this process, decision makers researched available products on the market and selected Deep Freeze .Howes noted that there were only a small pool of products that would meet the company's requirements, and the former Steady State software wasn't going to do it for us as it did not have any central management feature or support for Windows 7 operating system.

The SkyWest IT team then deployed DeepFreeze Enterprise on the organization's 700PCs. During the transition phase, the company relied on the assistance of the Faronics Support team, which Howes said made the process a smooth change for SkyWest.

With Deep Freeze in place, SkyWest was able to improve the maintenance and repair process through remote management capabilities.

Deep Freeze streamlined software updates and enabled managers to carry out setting adjustments from its central management console instead of leaning on the IT team.

Benefits

One of the top advantages SkyWest has experienced since deploying Deep Freeze Enterprise across the organization is reduced time and expenditures spent on troublshooting, computers and traveling. Instead of requiring a computer technician to fly to the location where a system issue was being experienced, the administrator can simply request the technician to restart the computer or log into their central management console and fix the problem from their site.

This provided considerable travel and timesaving benefits for the company and its IT team. Furthermore, the mechanics benefited as they no longer had to wait for an IT technician to troubleshoot their issues. They would simply restart the computer to return it to its perfect working condition, which was now achieved in the same time it takes to restart a computer.

Deep Freeze has provided improved management capabilities for the company assets as well. Managers and administrators can easily monitor and manage computers throughout the organization. They can view and change settings through a reboot on as specific computer from their central management console. Additionally, the new solution allows system updates to be scattered at different times, so that maintenance does not interrupt the regular tasks performed on the computers at the airline locations.

After deploying Deep Freeze, SkyWest saw considerable cost and time saving benefits and is now able to better manage its IT infrastructure.

Faronics

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USA

5506 Sunol Blvd, Suite 202
Pleasanton, CA, 94566 USA

Call Toll Free: 1-800-943-6422
Fax Toll Free: 1-800-943-6488

sales@faronics.com

CANADA

1400 - 609 Granville Street
PO Box 10362 Pacific Centre
Vancouver, BC, V7Y 1G5

Call Toll Free: 1-800-943-6422
Call Local: 1-604-637-3333
Fax Toll Free: 1-800-943-6488

sales@faronics.com

EUROPE

8 The Courtyard, Eastern Road,
Bracknell, Berkshire,
RG12 2XB, United Kingdom

Call Local: 44 (0) 1344 206 414

sales@faronics.eu

SINGAPORE

6 Marina Boulevard
#36-22 The Sail At Marina Bay
Singapore, 018985

Call Local: +65 6520 3619
Fax Local: +65 6722 8634

sales@faronics.com.sg