SUCCESS STORY

Furniture manufacturer builds productivity

Low-cost computing for manufacturing

Challenge

Cost-effectively upgrade Fleetwood's computing infrastructure while ensuring high uptime in a harsh manufacturing environment.

Solution

Deploy the *NComputing* **L-series** virtual desktop solution in a ratio of eight **L-series** devices per shared PC.

Impact

Delivered substantial upfront savings; excellent reliability and uptime; significant reduction in electricity use and IT support.

Leveraging new technology is a key competitive edge in manufacturing. Legacy systems and outdated computers are quickly replaced to drive increased productivity from the company office to the factory floor. Fleetwood Industries, a furniture manufacturer based in Holland, Michigan, was typical in that it still had old 'green screens' and an outdated network that could only run limited manufacturing applications. Global competition pushed Fleetwood to invest in new technology to meet its productivity objectives, while tight margins and limited IT staff meant computing costs and support requirements had to be controlled.

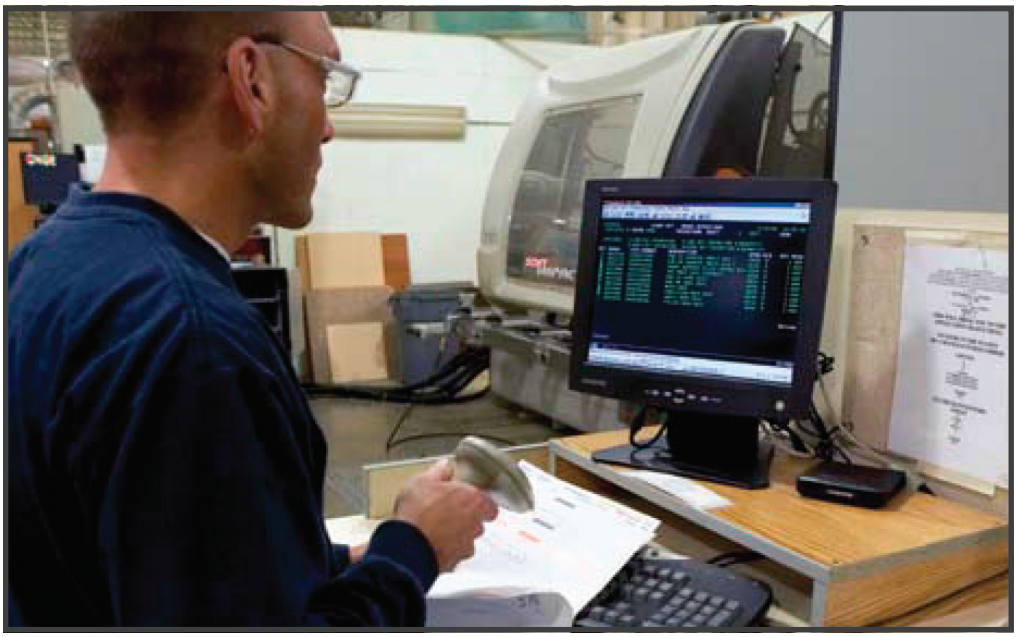

Image: Barcode tracking on the factory floor is reliable and affordable with NComputing.

Outdated equipment drags down productivity

With a central server in place, Fleetwood saw the opportunity to bring more advanced technologies to its factory floor, as well as making email and the company intranet available at every station. Replacing green-screen terminals and an outdated gateway to the server was the first step. "Thin clients didn't make sense in our environment," said Dave Van Dyke, IT manager for Fleetwood Industries. "They were too expensive, and took too long to set up and maintain. We looked at PCs too, but we had experienced problems in the past because our furniture factory is at times a very dusty, computer-hostile environment."

A solution rugged enough for the factory floor

"Price wasn't the only driver—we wanted a solution that met all of our requirements," said Mr. Van Dyke. "Our production processes on the factory floor depend on tight scheduling, so scanning in bar-coded data when each step is finished is key to productivity. Uptime is obviously critical."

Furniture manufacturer builds productivity

"We've found the NComputing devices to be incredibly reliable, and uptime is outstanding."

Dave Van Dyke
IT Manager

After hearing about *NComputing* from another manufacturer, Fleetwood did some research and found that the *NComputing* solution could meet all of their needs. By connecting their workstations to the shared PC and the server via *NComputing* access devices, they could access all of their applications without any loss of performance—and at a very low cost.

Today's PCs are so powerful that the vast majority of manufacturing and office applications only use a small fraction of the computer's capacity. *NComputing*'s virtualization software and hardware tap this unused capacity so that it can be simultaneously shared by multiple users. Each station's monitor, keyboard, and mouse is connected to the shared PC via a small and very durable *NComputing* access device, which has no CPU, memory, or moving parts, so it's easy to maintain, durable and rugged enough for the factory floor.

Fleetwood tested the *NComputing* solution and found they performed flawlessly on the server platform. "We are now using *NComputing* **L-series** to run our workstations," said Mr. Van Dyke. "We've found the *NComputing* devices to be incredibly reliable, and uptime is outstanding. Our manufacturing team members are more productive too, because they have access to additional applications, as well as alerts, databases, and engineering reference drawings."

Easy on IT, easier on the environment

Fleetwood also discovered that their *NComputing*-based infrastructure substantially cut deployment, maintenance, and support time. "We have a very small IT team, and it really made a difference in our workload," said Mr. Van Dyke. "Installing an *NComputing* station takes only a few minutes, and is very simple. We expect to see a significant drop in energy costs too, because the *NComputing* **L-series** only use 5 watts of power, compared to 150-200 watts for a PC. That's good for us, and good for the environment. We plan to migrate more stations to *NComputing* in the near future. Obviously, we're very impressed with the *NComputing* solution."

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