Case Study: HAMBS Medical Benefits Systems

Major IT solutions provider for Australia's private health-insurance industry uses PrinterLogic to simplify and secure print management.

Challenges

- In a multi-tenant Citrix/EDI-powered environment, printer administration was manual and time-consuming.

- Printer pools could not be conveniently and reliably segregated or securely accessed on a per-customer basis.

- Print management and printer provisioning were fragmented and complex.

Results

- Changes to printers and their settings now populate across the print environment with instant effect.

- Clients have been safely empowered with administrative privileges over their own printers.

- The printing and print-management experience are consistent, convenient and intuitive—both internally and remotely.

HAMBS, which stands for Hospital and Medical Benefits System, is a member-owned, not-for-profit company based in Adelaide, Australia. It was founded in 1991 when the users of the highly regarded HAMBS software application purchased the intellectual property from the original software developer. Those users, called funds, are located across Australia and operate within the country's thriving but competitive private health-insurance sector.

HAMBS' customer base has since increased from 18 initial funds to 25, and its internal workforce has grown from just three professional staff to 80. The services HAMBS provides have expanded in turn. In addition to the long-established HAMBS application, which is delivered to funds through a large Citrix server farm, the organization supports its clients in many aspects of health insurance information technology, including hosting, custom software development, and regulatory compliance.

"We have a domain called HASNET and a domain called HAMBS," explains Senior Systems Administrator Justin Reeves. "The HAMBS domain is our internal domain for the HAMBS staff, and HASNET is our hosted-services domain. All the funds will connect to us for services over private VPN links to the HASNET domain, and they'll run the HAMBS application as a Citrix application from their own domains."

In this complex, geographically distributed and tightly regulated environment, print management—both internally and for the individual funds—was challenging and laborious. For several years, the organization had its 30 Citrix servers and 10 EDI communications servers pulling double duty as print servers, which led to even more resource requirements and drawn-out print management processes.

HAMBS began researching enterprise print-management solutions that would allow the organization, and select clients, to administer some 200 distributed printer objects in a convenient, flexible and secure fashion.

"We're a multi-tenant solution, and we had to have a product that would allow us to segregate all those printers for 25 funds as different multi-tenanted options. PrinterLogic was the only product we could see that could do that efficiently and well. The other products we looked at just didn't meet that criteria," says Reeves.

After a limited test deployment to a small group of funds, HAMBS rolled out PrinterLogic to all of its clients.

"We used the PrinterLogic import tool, connected to one of our Windows print servers, imported the printers, and that was pretty much it. Then we created folders for each fund and dragged the relevant printers into the folders. It was really very easy to deploy. It took us a fraction of the time we thought it would take to actually set it up and configure it."

Challenge #1—Slashing Time Spent on Print Management

For HAMBS, even basic printer deployment and administration were painful, time-and task-intensive procedures.

"If somebody needed a printer driver updated, that meant going to every print server they were connecting to and updating the driver manually. Same with a configuration change or a papersize change," says Reeves. "We could take an hour to update something as simple as a printer driver for one fund."

This was especially frustrating during initial printer deployments, which often involved fine-tuning the printer settings to ensure seamless printing with the HAMBS software application. It was an exhausting trial-and-error process that grew even longer as each change was manually populated across multiple servers.

Although HAMBS attempted to automate some of these operations by using FinalBuilder, the sheer size and scope of its client pool limited the usefulness of that solution.

Solution

Through PrinterLogic's intuitive centralized management console, HAMBS can now make individual or multi-client printer changes with instant effect. Routine printer modifications as well as deployments are effortless.

> "PrinterLogic is a great product, and I'd recommend it to anyone. We've been able to serve our clients more quickly, so it's been great for our business."

"With PrinterLogic, we can simply go into the console and click on a different driver or change the paper size, and it's done," says Reeves. Before, clients could end up waiting several days for resolutions to their printer-deployment requests, and now HAMBS can now respond instantly: "We'll just jump on the PrinterLogic console and deploy it for them."

As a result, PrinterLogic has dramatically reduced the amount of time HAMBS spends on print management.

Challenge #2—Empowering Customers to Securely Administer Their Own Printers

Along with the ability to deploy and modify printers with greater ease, HAMBS wanted to extend certain management capabilities to its customers. Using traditional solutions, the organization's only option was an all-or-nothing scenario in which funds either had total access or were confined to the published applications on their Citrix server.

"All of the funds wanted access to the printers, but we couldn't grant it easily. Essentially, these are different funds that are all competing against each other, so we couldn't allow other funds to see who's connecting in and accessing the various printers," says Reeves.

But HAMBS couldn't find a convenient, reliable way to segregate printers and then authorize limited administrative access to those printers on a per-client basis.

Solution

PrinterLogic's seamless integration with Citrix environments, coupled with its user-centric flexibility, has allowed HAMBS to strike the perfect balance it was looking for—tightly partitioned printer pools with highly configurable levels of secure administrative access.

"We've locked it down to folders," Reeves explains, "so we've created customer-based security roles and then applied them to various folders. Now we can grant the administrators access to all the printers within that folder, but we'll lock it down to an extent where they can do certain things but not others. They can go in and change paper size, although we can actually customize it and even allow some funds to change a printer driver."

Challenge #3—Creating a Consistent Print Management Experience

With such a diverse number of clients and services, HAMBS found it difficult to establish a consistent print-management experience for its own staff as well as fund administrators.

Working with both Citrix and EDI servers required them to use both session-based and whole-server printer provisioning methods, depending on the circumstances. Operating different "private virtual bubbles" and domains—of which HAMBS and HASNET are only two—led to fragmentation of the print environment. That compounded the complexity of print management, adding unnecessary steps to profile changes and printer deployments, increasing the chances of human error and further prolonging response times.

Solution

PrinterLogic has given HAMBS the consistency it had been striving for. The centralized administration console allows internal staff to monitor, adjust and deploy printers throughout the organization, regardless of server or domain, from a single pane of glass. And PrinterLogic's uniform, user-friendly interface has made it even easier to do so.

"The staff love it. In the past, we've spent days trying to sort out printer problems because it took us so long to deploy and make changes. Now we can simply log into the console, make the changes and the customer can test it. If it doesn't work, we just make another change until we meet their satisfaction," says Reeves. "The funds we've allowed access have found it very seamless and are very impressed with it, too."

HAMBS also plans to enable PrinterLogic's available Mobile Printing and Pull Printing features, which will give its customers access to advanced functionality across the network.

Conclusion and Savings Summary

Reeves estimates that HAMBS is now saving "at least ten hours per month" in print management since implementing PrinterLogic. "It adds up fairly quickly" when translated to hard costs, he says—not only because of the extra time that HAMBS staff had to set aside to deal with print management, but also because of how the delays impacted the funds' own customer service.

To derive even more ROI for itself and its clients, HAMBS will leverage PrinterLogic's comprehensive Print Auditing feature in the "near future." That will provide client-specific data on print activity and allow the funds to analyze and identify potential cost savings in areas like consumables and printer consolidation.

"PrinterLogic is a great product and I'd certainly recommend it to anyone," he says. "We've been able to serve our clients more quickly, so it's been great for our business."

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