



Case Study: RC Willey Home Furnishings

RC Willey Home Furnishings saves 80 hours per every printer driver deployment with PrinterLogic.

Challenges

- The company wanted to streamline printer deployment and installation in its distributed hybrid print environment.
- Routine print management of direct IP printing with thin clients was complex and cumbersome.
- Trained technicians were required to micromanage the print environment and be physically present to make local changes.

Results

- After rolling out PrinterLogic in under one day, thin-client printer deployment is effortless and installation is fully automated.
- Thanks to centralized management, PrinterLogic has done away with repetitive manual print-related changes and setup.
- RC Willey has significantly reduced time spent on print management—for example, an estimated 80 hours on each company-wide driver change.

More than 80 years ago, Rufus Call Willey began selling Hotpoint appliances door to door in the tiny farming community of Syracuse, Utah. Capitalizing on his growing reputation for quality and affordability, he operated out of his red pickup truck until opening the first retail building under his own name in 1950.

By 1990, [RC Willey](#) had opened six stores throughout Utah and had become one of the best-known home furnishings retailers in the state. Its good standing with customers—and its revenues—attracted the interest of Berkshire Hathaway, Inc., which would acquire the company just five years later. Just before the turn of the century, RC Willey began its first out-of-state expansion into Idaho. Multiple stores in Nevada and California would soon follow.

True to its origins in the back of a dusty red pickup, RC Willey remains a family-operated company that deals in appliances, but it has long since widened its retail offerings to include an impressive selection of furniture, electronics, mattresses and flooring. The company now oversees fourteen locations in multiple cities across four states—along with a large printer fleet to support its printing needs. In addition to dedicated-purpose printers like thermal printers and receipt printers, RC Willey operates "a couple hundred" general-purpose printers that service 1,500 total users.

"We have several dozen printers per location," explains Chris Williams, senior systems administrator at RC Willey. "We use printers throughout the stores to print invoices for our customers or to print daily reports for our salespeople. So we rely on our printing infrastructure a lot."

The company's IT environment is a mix of workstations on the central domain network and a dynamic pool of remote thin clients. For printing,

the domain machines rely on a central print server and the thin clients rely on manually configured direct IP printer connections. This hybrid infrastructure in a distributed environment makes print management incredibly time-consuming and inefficient when using traditional solutions.

"It was one of those background problems where you're always looking for some way to do it better," Williams says.

While researching print management solutions, Williams came across [PrinterLogic](#) and thought it might be the better way he and his colleagues had been looking for.

"I've been in IT for 20 years. I've seen what's out there, and I haven't seen anything quite like PrinterLogic for our specific purpose," he says. "We looked for competitors but we didn't find any that did quite the same thing."

Once the authorization to migrate to PrinterLogic was secured, Williams was able to implement the new print management solution by himself across in the course of a single business day.

"As I remember, we had PrinterLogic up and running within an hour or two. It really didn't take very long. Importing the printers took just a little bit longer—probably another hour. I hardly remember any details from the deployment because it took so little time."

Challenge #1—Streamlining Printer Deployment in a Hybrid Environment

"We have kind of a split environment," Williams explains. "Some of our printing infrastructure is centralized on one print server. But we also have a lot of direct IP connections. Our domain machines will use the

print server, but a lot of our thin clients aren't domain joined, and so on those we had to create separate direct IP connections to every printer that we needed."

In this environment, basic printer deployment and installation was a resource-intensive task with traditional print management solutions. Although more robust than their print server counterparts, the direct IP printer connections had to be created manually every time a thin client moved or a printer was changed.

Solution

With PrinterLogic, RC Willey's end-users enjoy the benefits of direct IP printing alongside reliable automated printer deployment to thin clients at remote sites.

"We now have printers deployed to IP ranges in each location, and so, no matter where we send the thin client, the first time it boots, it gets the printers," Williams says. "And we don't even need to do the commit because it'll get the printer every time anyway. It's a big time reduction. You don't even need a trained person to put it in place."

Challenge #2—Increasing the Ease of Print Management

Even after the printers were deployed to thin clients, print management was far from straightforward in the company's previous print environment. Williams cites one colleague's frustration over the "dozens of printers" that would accumulate on the thin clients as they were moved throughout the organization.

"He also swaps out printers very frequently for newer models," he says. Hardware upgrades like this naturally call for a change in drivers, which required laborious manual intervention without PrinterLogic's centralized administration and batch management options.

Solution

The new print management solution from PrinterLogic has given the thin-client admin team "the ability to wipe out any existing printers and replace them all with PrinterLogic printers." This is one of the many tools PrinterLogic provides to make simple, uniform changes en masse and avoid the cumulative buildup of associated devices that can affect performance and efficiency.

When it comes to upgrading printers for existing thin clients, PrinterLogic allows Williams' colleague to "re-push the new driver so he doesn't have to visit those 100 thin clients in that store and change the driver," thereby eliminating the need for repetitive manual tasks and the related risk of human error.

"And if the driver's giving us trouble, we now have the ability to just change the drivers on the printer object on the fly," Williams says. "That's not easy to do on Windows. You have to redeploy the whole thing."

Challenge #3—Reducing Time Spent on Print Management

For RC Willey, ease of print management was not enough. The company and its IT team wanted to reduce the considerable time it

was spending on print management, compounded by the need for techs to be physically present to make local changes.

"In our thin-client environment with direct IP printing, we have a lot of turnover, a lot of moving of stations, and a lot of replacement. We're almost constantly replacing old units," Williams explains. This constant flux led to increased investment in print management, particularly during the initial thin-client setup.

"We never knew where the unit was going, so we imaged them centrally, shipped them out, set them up, and once they booted up they would install the printers. Then they had to commit those changes and restart. And so it was at a cost of 15 or 20 minutes per unit to set up three or four direct IP connections. It was a long process."

Solution

Because PrinterLogic is able to deploy printers automatically, the company's IT team is recouping the 20-minute expenditures it once devoted to printer setup with every release of every new thin client.

"We're replacing dozens of thin clients a month," says Williams, "which means PrinterLogic is saving us hours a month—just for the setup alone. Eliminating that touch eliminates the travel time too."

Nor are the time gains limited to printer deployment. "Before, to change a driver that wasn't included with Windows, we'd have to visit every single thin client, go to the printer properties, change the driver to it, and reboot. In PrinterLogic, you just change it on the server, wait for the client refresh, and it gets the new driver. It saves five minutes per thin client at the very minimum."

"Some of our stores have anywhere from 50 to 100 thin clients. Multiply that times 14 locations, and we're saving about five thousand minutes—more than 80 hours—for each driver change."

Conclusion and Savings Summary

Williams says that "ROI was a key factor" in choosing PrinterLogic as a print management solution, but the company has yet to conduct any hard data analysis on time and cost savings, including reductions in print-related calls to the service desk as a result of improved printing availability.

"With PrinterLogic, along with the time we're clearly saving on daily print management, we could avoid hiring a person in a couple locations because, now that printers are so easy to deploy, you don't need anybody with any IT knowledge to install the thin clients," he says.

"As far as single-purpose solutions go, PrinterLogic is honestly one of the most effective I've seen in my entire career. I see it expanding to our domain network and eliminating our print server. We haven't yet implemented that, but that's the next phase."



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