

SYNERNET, INC.

HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client provides secure platform for healthcare



"Security is our utmost concern in the medical transcription business. Because the HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client has no hard drive, no sensitive data is being written locally and we don't have to worry about security breaches."

—Jeff Laniewski, Vice President, Synernet, Inc.

HP customer case study: Synernet strengthens security, eases maintenance with HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client in employee home offices

Industry: Healthcare business services

Objective:

Deploy secure platform for home-based medical transcription

Approach:

Equip work-at-home transcriptionists with HP Compaq t5720 Thin Clients with Microsoft® Windows® XP Embedded

IT improvements:

- Easy maintenance: Help Desk calls down 70 percent
- Secure system: no sensitive information residing on worker machines
- Scale easily to add new employees

Business benefits:

- Comply with healthcare security and privacy regulations
- Accommodate double-digit annual business growth
- Free IT staff time for greater productivity



In the medical transcription business, customer deliverables must be accurate and secure; people's lives depend on it. Delivering faithfully on that promise has enabled Synernet, Inc. to grow in five years from 36 employees to 128 and counting. With growth, however, comes challenge. Synernet transcriptionists work from home. In the beginning, they all supplied their own PCs. As the company grew, though, it became burdensome for Synernet's IT staff to troubleshoot problems arising from this varied collection of machines. What's more, Synernet wanted to strengthen its information security to be as ironclad as possible. The answer was the HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client.

“We needed to deploy everybody on a single platform so that when there were issues we could either isolate them to an individual machine or know there might be problems system wide. The HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client environment provides everyone the same piece of equipment, taking out the mismatches that made IT maintenance so difficult.”
Jeff Laniewski, Vice President, Synernet, Inc.

“We needed a creative solution that was secure, easy for our IT staff to maintain, and user friendly for our transcriptionists,” says Jeff Laniewski, Synernet’s Vice President. “Because the HP Thin Client environment lets us maintain files on our own servers instead of downloading them to employee PCs, we don’t have to worry about security breaches even in the most drastic situations, like if home machines are compromised or stolen.”

A need for robust security

As a member of MaineHealth, an integrated healthcare delivery system, Portland-based Synernet provides medical transcription, physician credentials verification, insurance claims management, group purchasing and clinical engineering services to hospitals and healthcare organizations throughout New England, South Carolina and Idaho. It’s transcription business employs some 95 at-home workers scattered from Maine to California. Before adopting the HP Thin Client solution, Synernet linked worker PCs to its Virtual Private Network via remote desktop connections.

The primary motivation to change to thin client devices was security. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, HIPAA, defines the requirements Synernet must follow for securing Protected Health Information. Although these privacy and security protocols had never been breached at Synernet, the company saw an opportunity to improve the system while also simplifying maintenance. “It was hard for

our IT staff to troubleshoot the entire universe of home based PCs, many of which might be outdated and used by the whole family for music, games or whatever,” Laniewski explains. “We needed to ensure all staff were deployed on a single platform, with consistent software and up to date patches and, most importantly for security reasons, had no hard drive.”

Synernet worked with HP Partner PC Connection of Merrimack, N.H., to select a solution. Synernet chose HP Thin Clients because they come bundled with Altiris Deployment Solution, a software package enabling remote system management. Synernet’s model choice was the HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client with Microsoft Windows XP Embedded and 512 MB of DDR RAM memory. It also purchased HP Care Pack Service.

The HP Compaq t5720 HP Thin Client delivers reliability, lower ownership costs and extended product life through a solid state design with no moving parts. The device comes with HP Sygate Security Agent pre-installed, making it easy to lock down user settings and parameters on the client, while all critical user data and applications reside on a secure, centralized server. The Altiris standards-based management solution reduces deployment, update and maintenance costs. “We can log in as administrator, make any changes that are needed on a one-to-one basis, save it and get out,” Laniewski says. Synernet end users, meanwhile, can set their devices either vertically or horizontally on their desktops, or with HP Quick Release mounting set the devices on a wall, under a desk or even on the back of a compliant monitor.

“With the HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client, we’ve seen almost a 70 percent decrease in help desk calls. You can imagine how burdensome it could get for the IT department when we had multiple different platforms and service providers.”

Jeff Laniewski, Vice President, Synernet, Inc.

“HP Thin Clients reduce the Total Cost of Ownership by eliminating the need to install and update software on geographically dispersed client machines and enable cost-effective, secure remote access for users,” Laniewski says.

A streamlined, secure HP Thin Client environment

The first thing Synernet did with its HP Compaq t5720 Thin Clients was remove software such as instant

messaging that transcriptionists don't need. Next they loaded Dolby's Fusion Player voice file decryption software; they'd chosen Microsoft Windows XP Embedded precisely for the power to load their own applications. The access gateway is Web Citrix Client 10.2. Through this Citrix portal, end users access all needed Windows applications that sit on a Synernet server.

"We've streamlined our system and strengthened security by giving end users access to only those applications they need to do their jobs," Laniewski explains. "Anything the transcriptionists need we can serve up at the Citrix level. We customized the HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client so that it opens Internet Explorer directly to our Citrix portal, which prompts them for a user name to log in. When they log in, Citrix automatically secures a tunnel to the VPN. They can listen to the voice files, but once the HP Thin Client is rebooted everything is wiped out. From a user standpoint, it's great ease of use and for IT the software update process is managed simply from the central location."

Now every Synernet transcriptionist enjoys state-of-the-art, reliable technology tools to support the productivity by which their performance is measured. As a result, help-desk calls have dropped over 65 percent at Synernet, freeing IT time for more-productive work. For example, the IT staff is preparing to survey home workers about productivity software packages they favor, such as medical spell checkers. In the HP Thin Client environment, it will be simple to give universal access to these tools through the central server.

Synernet also is looking into deploying the HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client throughout the rest of the company, so employees providing services other than transcription may enjoy greater job flexibility while reducing energy consumption. "We could consider letting more folks work from home, or split time at the office and at home," Laniewski says. "That yields environmental benefits too, both because of the HP Thin Client's energy efficiency and the savings on staff commuting."

"We wanted an environment with no hard drive, so we wouldn't have to worry about what a thief might be able to extract from machines if they were stolen from employees' homes. That meant moving to the HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client."

Jeff Laniewski, Vice President, Synernet, Inc.

"HP Thin Clients are installed for a lower initial capital investment," he explains, "and require lower ongoing expenditures and administrative costs. We're able to streamline operations, improve environmental impact and simultaneously provide our employees with real benefits to their work experience."

The HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client environment also will scale easily to accommodate Synernet's ongoing growth. Revenues have expanded in the double digits annually over the past five years, with no end in sight. Laniewski estimates the employee base will continue to rise as productivity gains and excellent customer service help Synernet continue to thrive.

Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications

Work-at-home medical transcription

Primary hardware

- HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client

Primary software

- Microsoft Windows XP Embedded
- Altiris Deployment Solution

HP Services

- HP Care Pack

"Our HP Thin Client solution is easy to expand, even in our Portland office where some 30 employees work," Laniewski says. "All the applications are pre-loaded via Citrix, so to increase by 50 workers takes only as long as it takes the person on the other end to plug the device in and connect. That's very scalable. It's my hope that in the next 12 months HP Thin Clients will be in use by all our staff so they can work from home as well."

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Jeff Laniewski, Vice President, Synernet, Inc.

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