

NOODLES & COMPANY

HP Mobile Thin Clients satisfy hunger for field work solution



“Senior operations managers wanted field personnel to spend less time working in front of their home PCs and more time face to face with restaurant general managers. HP Mobile Thin Clients were the ideal solution for mobile efficiency and effective collaboration.”

—Jeff Malm, Enterprise Manager, Noodles & Company, Broomfield, Colo.

HP customer case study: Noodles & Company deploys HP Mobile Thin Clients for on-the-road productivity, effective collaboration

Industry: Restaurant

Objective:

Free area managers to work efficiently on the road and spend more time with restaurant managers

Approach:

Deploy HP Mobile Thin Clients with Citrix gateway and HP BladeSystems

IT improvements:

- HP Mobile Thin Clients hardware cost approximately 30% less than traditional mobile platforms¹
- Platform integrates seamlessly with existing Citrix farm
- Simplified manageability lessens IT burden
- Solid-state design increases reliability and lifecycle

Business benefits:

- Mobility frees managers to collaborate on-site with restaurant operators
- Infrastructure and maintenance costs reduced
- Corporate data is protected on remote servers
- Solution scales easily to support corporate growth



Fresh wholesome food, low prices and a kid-friendly atmosphere—that’s the recipe for success at Noodles & Company. The company for the past three years has been opening 25 to 30 new restaurants annually, with no sign of letup even as competitors feel the bite of dwindling demand. But with success came a challenge. Having grown to 200 locations in 18 states, Noodles employed two dozen area managers each overseeing miles of territory. The managers needed to be on the road meeting in person with restaurant operators but were spending too much time chained to their desktop PCs doing administrative tasks. Noodles found the ideal solution. It equipped each area manager with an HP Compaq 6720t Mobile Thin Client, freeing the managers to collaborate effectively in person with restaurant staff. The move was so successful that soon other Noodles employees, from

"We have had overwhelmingly good feedback from out in the field with this solution. In fact, once our regional directors saw how their area manager teams could work more efficiently, they moved to HP Mobile Thin Clients."

Jeff Malm, Enterprise Manager, Noodles & Company



regional directors to finance staff, wanted their own HP Mobile Thin Clients. The solution grew to spread cost-efficiency, security and productivity enhancements throughout "Noodleville."

"Once we put this product through the field operations test, it was quickly clear that it would work for us. It has a 1 GB solid-state drive, plenty of space. We have the interoperability we need with our wireless air cards, which give us very fast network connections. In general these devices have worked out flawlessly."

Jeff Malm, Enterprise Manager, Noodles & Company

"The HP Mobile Thin Client platform for us has been a real home run," says Jeff Malm, Noodles Enterprise Manager. "Our operations executives love the fact that our field personnel can spend more time out at the restaurants. It leads to more efficiency, better decisions and long-term growth."

Directive from HQ: mobile tools for area managers

Each Noodles area manager oversees between seven to 10 restaurants. Before the company adopted its HP Mobile Thin Client solution, the managers would get up early every morning, and before heading out to visit the restaurants sit at their home desktop PCs to catch up on a deluge of emails and administrative tasks. Corporate executives wanted the managers to spend more time in the field. They asked Noodles technical staff to outfit the area managers with laptop PCs. Malm and his team had a different idea. "That's when IT said, 'Wait a minute!' Mobile thin client hardware would cost significantly less, be more secure

if a device was lost or stolen, and work well with our Citrix infrastructure," Malm recalls.

Noodles uses a Citrix Access gateway infrastructure to provide employee access to work tools such as the Microsoft® Office suite and a range of restaurant management applications provided by eRestaurant Services enterprise software for food services. It uses HP ProLiant Server Blades and VMware software in HP BladeSystem c-Class Enclosures. The company also uses HP Printers with their HP Compaq 6720t Mobile Thin Client.

Having been satisfied for years with HP solutions, Noodles ran a proof of concept test with the HP Compaq 6720t Mobile Thin Client. "The rest is history," Malm says. "Once we put this product through the field operations test, it was quickly clear that it would work for us. It has a 1 GB solid-state drive, plenty of space. We have the interoperability we need with our wireless air cards, which give us very fast network connections. In general these devices have worked out flawlessly."

"Given our Citrix deployment and the number of field workers on Citrix, HP Mobile Thin Clients made sense from a cost perspective."

Jeff Malm, Enterprise Manager, Noodles & Company

A lower-cost, secure, scalable solution

Noodles equipped each of its 24 area managers with the device. Now the area managers can sit down with their individual restaurant managers, boot up their HP

Mobile Thin Clients, and go over sales reports, labor costs, food costs—all the data needed to collaborate effectively. Their bosses—the company’s three regional directors of operations—after seeing how well the devices worked for their teams, each wanted their own HP Mobile Thin Client. “It wasn’t even a sell for me,” he says.

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Jeff Malm, Enterprise Manager, Noodles & Company

Then one day, a regional training manager had his laptop stolen. Malm had an HP Mobile Thin Client on hand to replace it. The solution worked so well that soon all five Noodles training managers were using the devices, for example, to make presentations out in the field. Some of these use the HP 2533t Mobile Thin Client, with a starting weight of only 3 pounds and as thin as 1.34 inches. The finance department also acquired this model for work on the road. Today Noodles uses approximately 40 HP Compaq 6720t Mobile Thin Clients and three HP 2533t Mobile Thin Clients. Some have the optional docking stations and most have the optional DVD optical drive. The devices not only enable employees to work more productively, they also deliver substantial cost, security and technology management advantages.

Effective collaboration, greater productivity

A regional director recently had his HP Mobile Thin Client stolen; with corporate data stored on secure servers, Noodles didn’t have to worry about

compliance headaches or information landing in the wrong hands. “It was a bummer to have it stolen, but thank goodness it was an HP Mobile Thin Client with no hard drive and no data stored on the device,” Malm says. Technology management also is very easy, since all the devices can be updated simultaneously with the application software on the servers. “We’re no longer patching 40 laptops out there,” he says. “For the most part, everything about the user’s desktop experience is managed at the Citrix level.”

Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications

Restaurant management, presentations, financial management

Primary hardware

- HP Compaq 6720t Mobile Thin Client
- HP 2533t Mobile Thin Client
- HP BladeSystem c-Class Enclosure
- HP ProLiant Server Blades

HP Services

- HP Care Pack

The HP Mobile Thin Clients also are reliable, with solid-state design extending product life and lowering ownership costs.

Noodles continues to expand; its low price/fresh food strategy is especially appealing to consumers in challenging economic times. The HP Mobile Thin Client solution will scale easily to accommodate more users, Malm says; just add more devices and more

blades. Noodles also is looking into Altiris Deployment Solution software, an enterprise level management solution. "We're looking at how we can scale out in a way that we can centrally administer these devices," Malm says. "That's our next phase. Since we work directly with HP, I can tell you first hand: It has been a pleasure doing business. The solutions, service and support have been outstanding."

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