

Arkema

Aiming first to streamline its migration to Windows 7, and second to simplify all future software deployments, Arkema selected Micro Focus® Application Virtualization as its strategic tool for software packaging. In addition to enabling faster and easier packaging and distribution, the solution reduces compatibility issues and makes it practical to virtualise even applications that are used by fewer than 10 employees.

Overview

The leading French chemicals company, Arkema, is active in more than 40 countries and employs some 14,000 people. In 2010, the company turned over 5.9 billion. Arkema is focused on innovation, using its eight research centres to produce new solutions to help clients tackle such challenges as climate change, access to drinking water and future energy sources.

Challenge

Facing a major upgrade of its workstations from Microsoft Windows 2000 to Windows 7, Arkema wanted to minimise the administrative impact and to ensure that all applications would continue to function as expected. The built-in backwards compatibility function—Windows XP Mode—was not a viable option as it could not be managed and was therefore

seen as more of a consumer solution than a corporate one. The company also wanted to avoid potential middleware conflicts, for example, so that it could run multiple different versions of the Java run-time environment on the same machine.

To meet both requirements, the company planned to virtualise its applications so that they would run isolated from other applications in 'capsules.' The challenge was to find a cost-effective virtualisation tool that would enable the simple, rapid packaging of applications ready for delivery to workstations. Looking beyond the upgrade project, Arkema planned to standardise on virtualisation as its approach to application delivery, so the company needed a strategic tool that would fit well with the rest of its infrastructure.

Solution

Arkema considered a variety of solutions, including offerings from VMware and Microsoft, then decided to run a head-to-head comparison of the Micro Focus and VMware solutions.

"The two offerings were functionally similar, but we felt that Application Virtualization had the edge in terms of its capabilities," said Jean-Marc Bertrand, Workstation Infrastructure Manager at Arkema. "Equally, the Novell (now part of Micro Focus) solution is a more polished and



At a Glance

■ Industry

Manufacturing

■ Location

France

■ Challenge

After upgrading to Windows 7, the company wanted to ensure that all applications would function as expected.

■ Solution

Use Application Virtualization to avoid potential middleware conflicts.

■ Results

- + Enabled rapid packaging of applications for deployment
- + Created isolated 'capsules,' enabling otherwise incompatible applications to run side-by-side
- + Simplified and accelerated upgrade of workstations from Windows 2000 to Windows 7

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Workstation Infrastructure Manager
Arkema

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Arkema worked with Soluprest, a partner, to rapidly deploy the new solution. To date, Arkema has virtualised seven of its most widely used applications, packaging them as .msi files ready for automated deployment.

“Our initial focus was to virtualise the applications that would otherwise not run on Windows 7,” said Bertrand. “Looking to the future, our default installation method could include using Application Virtualization. One of the advantages ... is that it doesn’t force us to adopt new ways of working: we can continue to use our existing software distribution tool to deliver the .msi packages to workstations.”

The virtualisation solution has already helped Arkema to avoid additional software investments. The company wanted to stay on Microsoft Office 2003 for financial reasons, but some employees require functionality that is only available in more recent versions of Excel. For these users, Arkema has used Application Virtualization to package the more recent versions so that they run in isolation alongside the 2003 software.

“Application Virtualization makes it quick and easy to virtualise applications, and also enables us to set up communication between the virtual applications,” said Bertrand. “The solution saves us considerable time in packaging and validation.”

Results

Even though Arkema already had a highly industrialised approach to workstation management, using automated tools to push out applications and updates over the network, Application Virtualization is saving time and effort.

“What used to take the most time was uninstalling old versions of software and dealing with the resulting problems,” said Bertrand. “By virtualising applications so that they run in isolated capsules, the Novell (now part of Micro Focus) solution eliminates this issue, enabling us to quickly deploy new applications with no concerns about instability for users. When we have fully adopted the solution, we estimate that we will save around 1,000 man-hours per year.”

Arkema expects ultimately to virtualise between 80 and 90 percent of its 400 applications, prioritising them according to the number of users and importance to the business. The company will also use the software to ease the migration of its remaining workstations to Windows 7.

“Historically, we have manually installed any applications used on ten or fewer workstations, because it took too much time and effort to package them,” said Bertrand. “Application Virtualization significantly accelerates the packaging process, which will make it economically viable to prepare more of our applications for automated deployment.”



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