



Case Study | **WISE Employment Strengthens Digital Transformation Strategy with Parallels Remote Application Server**

Australian not-for-profit employment services company chooses Parallels Remote Application Server to empower employees with mobility and security, laying the groundwork for more value-added digital services.

Business Situation Summary

WISE Employment has a highly decentralized staff of 650 employees working across more than 60 branch offices and 20 outreach sites. Saddled by an aging IT infrastructure, the organization found it a challenge to empower a mobile workforce while ensuring data privacy and security.

Solution Summary

After solving the performance issues plaguing its networking infrastructure, WISE Employment selected Parallels Remote Application Server (RAS) to virtualize its applications and data, providing seamless delivery to all employees across the continent, no matter where they are working and what operating system they are using.

Results Summary

Choosing Parallels RAS has enabled WISE Employment to maintain data privacy and security accreditation in compliance with the Australian government—while delivering uncompromisingly smooth and seamless information and applications to its employees so that they can be productive everywhere they go. With Parallels RAS as an anchor, this solid foundation has also given WISE Employment the confidence to explore more advanced digital tools for its employees.

Introduction

Established in 1992, WISE Employment is a not-for-profit employment services provider dedicated to helping disadvantaged and marginalized job seekers in Australia secure meaningful work so that they may become self-sufficient.

WISE Employment thinks of itself as a “job services” provider rather than a “job agency.” It takes a long-term view of employability and career prospects of its clients. Over the past 25 years, the organization has grown to become one of Australia’s leading specialist employment service providers, providing tailored employment solutions to 10,000 job seekers across the country annually, including people with disability, mental illness, ex-offenders, refugees, and indigenous communities.

In addition to traditional career services such as job seeking, interview coaching, and resume building advice, WISE Employment’s innovative approach goes one step further: the organization runs three socially inclusive enterprises that also offer employment opportunities to its target audience.

Over the past 15 years, more than A\$3.5 million has been invested into these innovative projects to support job seekers. Today, WISE Employment's social enterprises employ more than 150 people directly.

Business Situation and Challenges

WISE Employment faced a particularly unique challenge: a highly decentralized workforce.

The organization employs a sizeable staff of around 650 people who are spread over 62 branch offices across five Australian states. This is excluding 20 additional outreach sites that most employees will have to visit at least once a day, some of them in remote rural areas.

While they are on the move, employees need to be constantly connected to various Australian government systems and databases, where client information and records are stored and updated in real time.

Despite this non-negotiable need for mobility and connectivity, all 500 of WISE Employment's staff were still saddled with aging IT equipment and infrastructure, such as wired Internet connections in office and blocky old laptops.

This gave rise to a myriad of issues. The productivity of workers not equipped to go mobile suffered, and those who did go mobile without the proper technology and support resulted in a major headache on the data security and compliance fronts.

To complicate matters, an additional 150 staff are employed in the organization's social enterprises, each with its own individual set of IT requirements.

To effectively serve the productivity and efficiency needs of these 650 employees over dozens of sites, WISE Employment faced a clear and urgent need to modernize its IT infrastructure.

"We needed an IT infrastructure that could keep up with the times," said Mick Havill, chief information officer at WISE Employment. "Our old way of approaching IT was simply no longer sufficient for today's operational needs."

However, this gave rise to another major challenge: the financial cost of modernization.

"The price tag of some of those 'digital transformation' software and services in the market really raised our eyebrows," said Mick. "As mentioned earlier, WISE Employment doesn't just operate as a job services provider; we run three social enterprises as well. All of our money is poured back into creating more opportunities for the disadvantaged, so this means we really have to stretch the dollar where it counts."

Solution

In concept, WISE Employment decided that desktop and application virtualization was the most efficient and cost-effective way to solve many of their IT challenges. Data could be stored and secured centrally, then delivered seamlessly to hundreds of end users—wherever they were located—on their preferred platform, be it Microsoft Windows, Apple® macOS®, iOS, or Android.

However, as a critical first step, WISE Employment had to upgrade its connectivity infrastructure.

"Our previous connection was a nightmare and cost us an eye-popping amount to upkeep across 62 branch offices," Mick said. "Here's a classic example we use to illustrate how bad it was: when we tested out a centralized virtualization service, a simple training document took more than half an hour to be delivered and opened."

Keeping its highly mobile workforce in view, WISE Employment took the unconventional step of going all-in on mobile; Mick cut the cord altogether and moved his entire workforce onto a 4G network infrastructure.

"The move to 4G worked wonders. Almost immediately, we enjoyed a tremendous 200-fold improvement in throughput than our previous copper connection," said Mick. "Employees were also happily armed with high-speed mobile broadband that enables them to stay connected and productive wherever they may go."

With the immediate connectivity performance issues resolved, and with a mobile framework in place to drive a mobility strategy, WISE Employment then chose Parallels Remote Application Server (RAS) to deliver mission-critical data and applications to its employees. This was done with the help of Parallels partner Microworx, who assisted WISE Employment to gain the greatest “bang for buck” for their investment.

Among the many benefits and features offered by Parallels RAS, its strong data security and privacy were two key features that WISE Employment appreciated. The organization works with a lot of government data. For example, to conduct its services effectively, WISE Employment has to access a wide variety of personal client data stored on government servers, such as medical records, police records, and all sorts of family and personal background information.

Because of this, WISE Employment had to obtain accreditation under the Australian Signals Directorate’s Information Security Management System Framework, a set of 40 cybersecurity laws that consists of 40 policies supported by 140 standards. By locking down all data access under a central server and then delivering it to employees through Parallels RAS, WISE Employment was able to comply with all prevailing security and privacy laws and best practices.

Results

100% of WISE Employment’s staff are now mobile, enjoying full productivity both in office and at remote locations without sacrificing user experience. Thanks to Parallels RAS, they can access mission-critical data and applications wherever they go, which are delivered to their devices via a securely encrypted connection.

“The fact that Parallels RAS can deliver all applications that my employees need over a 4G connection is, quite frankly, remarkable,” Mick said. “And all that without any compromise in user experience, security, or compliance requirements!”

In fact, the user experience is so smooth and seamless that many employees don’t even realize they’re on a virtualized environment. They can devote all their energy toward servicing their clients.

Other employees expressed satisfaction with the small end-user enhancements in subsequent feature updates to Parallels, which continuously improved their productivity.

“A previous version of Parallels RAS did not come with support for multiple displays, and that caused us a little bit of grief internally as all of us are used to having our work laid out in front of us across two or three displays,” Mick recalled. “This almost turned out to be a showstopper for us.”

“We shared that feedback with Parallels and were pleasantly surprised when support for multiple displays came rolling out in the next update to Parallels RAS,” said Mick. “The way Parallels listens to customer feedback and then continuously gives us the features we need is just excellent.”

Tapping on Parallels RAS also gave WISE Employment the solid groundwork to further its digital transformation.

With the basics locked down thanks to Parallels RAS, especially in the realm of data privacy and security, WISE Employment is now looking at enhancing its services and offerings with more digital solutions.

For example, the organization is set to launch an online portal that enables its sub-contractors to access the same confidential data as its employees—without them knowing that they are doing so through an encrypted Parallels RAS connection.

“Powerful yet cost-effective, Parallels RAS has given us the confidence and flexibility to build more digital solutions for the future.” Mick concluded.

WISE Employment
empowerment through employment