



Windows[®] Essential Business Server

Customer Solution Case Study



Efficiencies Lead to 5,000 More Client-Service Hours a Year, 30 Hours Less IT Work a Week

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Healthcare—Provider

Customer Profile

Touchstone Behavioral Health, based in Glendale, Arizona, provides behavioral health services to Arizona youth from five locations across the state. The nonprofit organization employs 180 people.

Business Situation

Most of Touchstone's staff work outside the office, visiting the families they serve. Field staff wanted easier access to business systems, and IT staff wanted stronger data security and less management work.

Solution

Touchstone implemented Windows[®] Essential Business Server 2008, which packages messaging, management, security, and operating system software in one integrated solution.

Benefits

- Supportive foundation for new services
- Up to 5,000 more client hours annually
- IT work reduction of 30 hours weekly
- Lower licensing and energy costs
- Enhanced reliability and security

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Steven Porter, Chief Information Officer, Touchstone Behavioral Health

Touchstone Behavioral Health wanted to give 120 case managers secure remote access to work files. The company also wanted to reduce technology management work for its small IT staff as the company grew. Touchstone deployed Windows[®] Essential Business Server 2008, with the help of Microsoft[®] Gold Certified Partner itSynergy, to get the latest operating system, messaging, management, and security software in one integrated solution. The remote-access feature gives field workers secure, easy access to work documents and e-mail messages from any browser, which makes staff more efficient and enables them to spend 5,000 more hours annually with clients. The centralized management console saves the IT staff 30 hours a week, and consolidating servers reduces electrical costs by 40 percent. Software licensing is easier and less expensive, and Touchstone's infrastructure is more dependable.



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Situation

Touchstone Behavioral Health is a nonprofit organization that provides a range of youth behavioral health services, including anger management, crisis intervention, psychiatric evaluations, support groups, and parenting classes. The Glendale, Arizona-based organization has six sites throughout Arizona and employs 180 people.

Technology is critical in helping Touchstone meet ever-increasing healthcare regulations, empower its staff to be productive, and keep operating costs low. When Steven Porter arrived in mid-2006 to lead Touchstone's IT department, the organization had already upgraded the company's seven servers to the Windows Server® 2003 operating system, installed Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003 as its messaging system, and standardized on Microsoft SQL Server® 2000 data management software. The company's desktop computers ran the Windows® 2000 and Windows XP operating systems.

Porter's first job was to complete the company's implementation of an electronic medical records (EMR) system. He selected a Windows-based application called Credible Behavioral Health Software and hosted it externally to simplify maintenance and lower costs. An unanticipated benefit of hosting the EMR externally was the ability to access the application from any computer with an Internet connection. The entire workforce, including therapists, case managers, behavioral health aides, and family support partners, could access patient data anywhere they were online. This turned out to be a big help in making field employees more productive by eliminating drives back to the office to look up patient data.

Porter promptly issued notebook computers to 120 field professionals so that they could not only access the EMR over the Web, but also take notes on their computers during

family visits, complete reports from home or cafés, access needed information on corporate systems, and submit reports remotely. Employees accessing Touchstone servers remotely used Virtual Private Network (VPN) connections, however, and Porter worried about the security of confidential data.

While researching ways to make remote access easier and more secure, Porter realized that it was time to refresh Touchstone's aging server hardware, which was experiencing frequent failures. At that time—July 2008—Touchstone had eight servers in its main clinic and four in four of its other five offices.

Since it was upgrading hardware, Touchstone decided it was a good time to refresh server software, too. “We were happy with our Microsoft operating system, messaging, and database software,” Porter says. “But with the U.S. economic downturn, we wanted to find the most cost-effective way to upgrade all these applications to fit our nonprofit budget. We also realized that we could take advantage of the features in the latest versions of these programs to simplify remote access to e-mail and other data, and lay a secure foundation for rolling out Windows SharePoint® Services for online collaboration. We were also interested in taking advantage of some of the new Windows Server 2008 features for secure branch-office server implementation.”

In fact, Porter's staff spent at least two hours a day on remote-server issues. “We used [Windows XP] Remote Desktop, but without technical staff in those offices, we often had to bite the bullet and drive out there,” he says. Porter wanted to take the opportunity to reduce other aspects of his staff's workload by using modern system management technologies. At the time, the IT staff had a jumbled, reactive view of its infrastructure

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and spent nearly all of its time “fighting fires,” leaving little time to work with users and research new technologies that would make them even more effective in their jobs. On top of that, isolating problems and creating meaningful reports for management were major pains, according to Porter. “We had to work our way through different interfaces of multiple tools to extract information and then reassemble it in a common format,” he says. “I spent 10 hours a week digging up information and compiling it for our executives.”

Finally, as the organization grew, more effort was required to monitor the rising number of software licenses and ensure that Touchstone was compliant with its licensing terms.

Solution

Touchstone contacted itSynergy, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner in Phoenix, Arizona, for advice in going forward. itSynergy suggested that Touchstone satisfy all its needs by implementing Windows Essential Business Server 2008 Standard Edition, which packages operating system, management, messaging, and security software in one solution. This move would give Touchstone the opportunity to cost-effectively upgrade all of its server-side Microsoft products with a single Client Access License (CAL).

itSynergy enrolled Touchstone in the Microsoft Technology Adoption Program (TAP) for Windows Essential Business Server 2008 and deployed the software on a trio of Dell PowerEdge servers with quad-core Intel Xeon processors. The management server runs Microsoft System Center Essentials 2007, the mail server runs Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 Standard Edition and Microsoft Forefront™ Security for Exchange Server, and the security server runs Forefront Threat Management Gateway Medium Business

Edition. All run the Windows Server 2008 Standard operating system.

“itSynergy was a huge help in getting us into the TAP, transferring knowledge to our staff, and working with us every step of way,” Porter says. Most of the deployment was completed over a weekend in October 2008. When it consolidates and upgrades its accounting and human resources (HR) software in early 2009, Touchstone plans to upgrade to Windows Essential Business Server 2008 Premium Edition to take advantage of SQL Server 2008, which is provided with that edition.

The IT staff uses the centralized Administration Console in Windows Essential Business Server 2008 to monitor the entire IT environment, eliminating the need to log on to multiple consoles to view and troubleshoot systems. They can see the health of all systems at a glance and are proactively alerted to problems. They know right away if a security update or an installation fails. “We can manage by exception without going through pages of error logs to see if everything is working correctly,” Porter says.

To strengthen network security, Windows Essential Business Server 2008 includes several threat models and can accept user-defined models as well. The program’s premium anti-spam and antivirus engines help defend Touchstone’s network and mailboxes from spam and malware. A dedicated security page in the program gives Porter’s staff a rollup of security issues across the entire environment.

The IT and healthcare staffs both benefit from Remote Web Workplace, a feature in Windows Essential Business Server 2008 that provides an easy and secure way for employees to access the company network from outside the office. Today, Porter’s staff uses it to log on to their and other users’

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desktop computers to perform maintenance functions. Once Touchstone deploys Windows SharePoint Services, the field staff will be able to use Remote Web Workplace to access a wide range of work files posted to internal SharePoint sites.

For e-mail, employees use the RPC (Remote Procedure Calls) over HTTP feature in the Microsoft Office Outlook® 2007 messaging and collaboration client to eliminate the need for a VPN connection when checking e-mail remotely. They also make use of new features in Exchange Server 2007, such as shared calendars, to simplify teamwork.

Benefits

By implementing Windows Essential Business Server 2008, Touchstone Behavioral Health has obtained a strong foundation for new productivity-enhancing services that save time for field employees and IT staff alike. In addition, the company has reduced its licensing and IT operations costs, improved network reliability, and opened up plenty of growing room.

Supportive Foundation for New Services

With the latest Microsoft server operating system, messaging system, security protections, and management infrastructure, Touchstone has the solid foundation it needs to roll out new services that benefit employees and clients. With Exchange Server 2007, for example, field workers have more options for accessing e-mail messages: Use the improved Outlook Web Access interface over the Web, access the full-featured version of Office Outlook 2007, or use Windows Mobile® smartphones.

When Touchstone deploys Windows SharePoint Services, field employees will also be able to access data on SharePoint sites from notebook computers and smartphones, using Remote Web Workplace. With the

stronger security foundation provided by Windows Essential Business Server 2008, Touchstone can confidently enable such remote connectivity to its network without fear that confidential patient data will be compromised.

Up to 5,000 More Client Hours Annually

By moving to the hosted EMR system, enabling easy remote access to e-mail messages using Office Outlook 2007, and Web-enabling its file shares using SharePoint Web Services, Touchstone is making it possible for its field workers to have a rich, no-compromise office experience from outside the office. Touchstone will gradually move a whole range of documents off its file shares and onto SharePoint sites, including team operational documents, the HR employee directory, agencywide news, and program reference materials.

“The opportunities for collaboration and communication are endless,” Porter says. “I’ll also move users’ personal directories into SharePoint sites, where they can be backed up daily.”

Remote Web Workplace also provides the framework for accessing a planned business intelligence application that will provide field workers with additional clinical information regarding client treatment. “By having everything they need, wherever they are, employees won’t have to drive back and forth to the office in horrific Phoenix traffic to access materials,” Porter continues.

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IT Work Reduction of 30 Hours Weekly

For the IT staff, Windows Essential Business Server 2008 “simplifies everything,” Porter says. “Our days are full of small tasks, such

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as adding users to a domain or checking that updates have been applied. These tasks are all much faster and easier now, because we can perform or monitor them from the Administration Console. Saving 15 minutes here and there adds up, to the point where my staff is saving 10 hours a week on administrative and support functions. We can spend more time with users, transfer staff to productivity-enhancing projects, improve network security, and generally do more with fewer resources.”

The program has greatly reduced the time needed to monitor and manage Touchstone’s remote servers, as well. Instead of spending two hours a day monitoring these servers, the IT staff gets exception reports that enable it to preemptively address potential problems before outages occur.

Management reporting is also much easier. Porter used to spend 10 hours a week assembling and compiling information for management; Windows Essential Business Server 2008 now delivers the information automatically.

Lower Licensing and Energy Costs

The single Windows Essential Business Server 2008 CAL saves money for Touchstone versus purchasing licenses for the individual programs. “Windows Essential Business Server 2008 gives me more ‘bang for the buck’ when it comes to running my infrastructure,” Porter says. “The savings enable me to put more emphasis on technologies that add productivity capabilities for end users. Also, from a compliance standpoint, the single CAL has saved me several hundred grey hairs and untold hours, knowing that all my users are licensed for all the appropriate applications.”

One more savings: By reducing its server count from 12 to 5, Touchstone has achieved

a 40 percent reduction in power and cooling costs.

Enhanced Reliability and Security

By using the Forefront Threat Management Gateway, Touchstone is better able to comply with regulatory requirements relating to patient data security. This software provides a superior solution to a hardware-based firewall by providing more thorough message inspection. “The additional granularity available in the Windows Server 2008 Group Policy objects provides us with yet another tool that allows us to further define acceptable use,” Porter says. “Our users spend most of their time in the field. Enabling them to install a printer without a local administrative account is meaningful in our environment.”

“It’s certainly easier to manage security now, with our users and network protected from inadvertent malware downloads,” Porter says. “The bottom line is: our workers in the field need instant, no-excuses access to information so they can do their job and spend more time with clients. I want our infrastructure to be a utility—to always be there. Windows Essential Business Server 2008 helps us deliver this.”

Plenty of Growing Room

With Windows Essential Business Server 2008, Touchstone has room to grow. Opening a new office won’t involve extra technology management work, because the IT staff can manage additional servers through the Administration Console without extra effort. With a stable, streamlined IT foundation, Touchstone can proceed with deploying Windows SharePoint Services, Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging, and other innovations that will help employees work more collaboratively and productively.

“I now have the processing power and the infrastructure stability to concentrate on our

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For more information about Touchstone Behavioral Health services, call (623) 930-8705 or visit the Web site at: www.touchstonebh.org

business objectives instead of support initiatives," Porter says. "My goal is to provide users with up-to-date technology so they can spend more time with clients. With Windows Essential Business Server 2008, I can support that vision for the next five years."

Windows Essential Server Solutions

Windows Essential Business Server 2008 is part of the Windows Essential Server Solutions family, designed to help small and midsize businesses boost productivity and growth. Based on the latest innovations, Windows Essential Server Solutions dramatically simplify the deployment, ongoing management, and use of server technology. For more information about Windows Essential Business Server 2008, visit: www.microsoft.com/essential

Software and Services

- Windows Essential Server Solutions
 - Windows Essential Business Server 2008 Standard Edition
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Outlook 2007

Hardware

- Dell PowerEdge servers with quad-core Intel Xeon processors

Partners

- itSynergy

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