



Case Study: Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance

Indiana Farm Bureau ditches 138 print servers with PrinterLogic.

Challenges

- Faced with the prospect of upgrading print servers at each of its 138 field offices, the company was searching for more cost-effective and efficient print management solutions.
- Utilizing a centralized print server in the headquarters would have forced print traffic over WAN connections, wasting bandwidth and delaying print jobs.
- Both IT and end-users wanted to retain—or improve—the existing printer deployment and automatic installation procedures.

Results

- In addition to saving the time and cost of upgrading all of its print servers, the company now enjoys centralized administration of its printers and zero driver conflicts.
- With minimal configuration time, printers are reliably deployed to location-based IP ranges and automatically installed when end-users connect at those locations.
- PrinterLogic's direct IP technology relays print jobs directly from the initiating workstation to the local printer, increasing network speed and performance.

For more than eighty years, Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance has been providing individuals, families, businesses and other organizations in the Hoosier State with the peace of mind that comes from a sound insurance policy. Over time, the company has grown to become a leading provider of auto and homeowners insurance across Indiana and continues to be the largest writer of farm insurance in this agriculture-reliant state.

From its headquarters in the state capital of Indianapolis, Indiana, Farm Bureau Insurance oversees 138 local offices. These offices are spread throughout all of Indiana's 92 counties. The combined workforce consists of more than 1,200 employees and over 450 agents, who must be able to operate efficiently in this extremely distributed environment to ensure that they are acting in the best interest of their clients as well as the company.

Faced with an aging IT infrastructure that was limiting the efficiency of many of these remote locations, in 2015 the company sought to optimize its entire technological backbone as part of a state-wide upgrade.

"We had old Windows 2003 servers in every field office, and we needed to do something about them—whether it be upgrade or replace the hardware," explains Stephanie Hayes, a systems administrator at Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance. "We decided to replace the servers with WAN accelerators in all of these satellite

offices to increase the network performance. But then the question became: How would we do printing? As you can imagine, that's hugely important, especially in an industry like ours. And that's where [PrinterLogic](#) came in."

PrinterLogic wasn't the only solution the company considered for managing its fleet of roughly 300 printers. Hayes and her colleagues looked at competing products and even thought about implementing a "local TCP/IP solution" that would deploy printers using group policy objects (GPOs).

"Even with the GPO we would have needed multiple GPOs for the all the various offices, so you're looking at 138 different configurations," she says. "How would we do that and manage it? And so, based on that and the fact that we wanted to get rid of our print servers, after looking into each of those solutions, we went with PrinterLogic. It also had a great price point."

Challenge #1—Centralizing Administration and Reducing Driver Conflicts

Before migrating to PrinterLogic, Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance had a multi-purpose server running print services in place at every office, making a total of 138 print servers. Those servers had initially been deployed, among other purposes, to help scale and manage

the organization's print environment, but in fact, they resulted in fragmentation rather than cohesion—not an uncommon outcome in enterprise scenarios. The inability to easily manage and deploy the correct drivers to end-users also caused software conflicts, which then resulted in extended troubleshooting sessions and service desk calls.

As part of its broader IT overhaul, the organization was also faced with the prospect of having to upgrade or replace its outdated print servers. That would entail purchase costs, licensing costs and installation costs—not to mention the ongoing costs of print server maintenance and management at every single location. Eliminating the print servers outright seemed like the ideal option, but the company didn't want to sacrifice functionality and ease of administration.

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Solution

With PrinterLogic, Indiana Farm

Bureau Insurance now enjoys streamlined print management across the enterprise, increased functionality, and greater ease of use—all with the added benefit of doing away with its 138 distributed print servers.

“We no longer have a server at every site,” says Hayes. “Not only is PrinterLogic easier to manage, it's definitely saved us time in administration because, as a server team, we're no longer having to manage drivers at the different offices and the various profiles. We can do it now from one location.”

“PrinterLogic also makes it easy to test new drivers and so forth. You don't have to push them out to everyone to find out if something works. That prevents a lot of driver conflicts.” The reduction in driver issues has likewise led to a reduction in service desk calls.

Challenge #2—Automating Printer Deployment and Installation for End-Users

In the process of migrating to a new print management solution, Indiana Farm Bureau didn't want to lose tried and tested functionality. The company had configured its print servers in such a way that local printers would be automatically deployed to specific IP ranges and then installed for users when they connected their computers at a particular office—a feature similar to location-based printing.

This was a process that the IT department as well as users both found convenient and comfortable, which is why the company wanted not only to retain it but improve upon it by implementing PrinterLogic.

Solution

“When we were looking into PrinterLogic, one of the things we liked was being able to deploy printers based on IP ranges to automatically install printers. That's what we were doing before with our print servers, so we were able to basically continue our same process—a process the users saw as familiar—with minimal interruption,” says Hayes.

“Each of those satellite offices has its own network, so we now have it set up so that as soon as a user's computer hits that network, PrinterLogic installs the printers for them. The user doesn't have to do anything. They don't have to think about it at all.”

An early experience with this deployment procedure illustrates PrinterLogic's ease of management. Immediately after implementing PrinterLogic, Hayes and her colleagues found that users' printers were being uninstalled automatically when those users moved to a new location. In most situations this is the desired default behavior, but the preferred method at Indiana Farm Bureau was to keep printers permanently installed and preserve the users' customized profile settings.

“After so many years with print servers, we weren't used to how easy centralized management was,” she says. “We clicked one checkbox in PrinterLogic and that fixed everything. Now the users still get their printers installed automatically, but they keep their specialized profiles too when they move from office to office.”

Challenge #3—Increasing Network Speed and Performance

One of the major reasons behind Indiana Farm Bureau's Field Office infrastructure upgrades was a desire to increase network performance over existing WAN connectivity. Implementing WAN accelerators in place of new servers made those performance increases possible. However, while other server functions could be effectively centralized to the headquarters, traditional print server functionality could not.

“Performance came into the picture big time when we were considering our options,” Hayes says. “We wanted users to be able to print so that it was actually local to their office and the print jobs didn't have to go over the WAN. That way their computers wouldn't have to communicate back to headquarters from all these field offices and then back to the field office for the print job.”

Solution

Because PrinterLogic uses proven direct IP printing, routine print traffic never crosses the WAN. Print jobs travel directly from the initiating workstation to the local printer. That keeps printer traffic—particularly those large, multi-megabyte jobs—to the local network, reducing the load on the WAN. This functionality was a key component to Indiana Farm Bureau's newly centralized infrastructure.

“PrinterLogic took care of our requirements for performance in field offices,” says Hayes. “By combining PrinterLogic with the WAN accelerators, we got the speed boosts we were looking for. We've been really pleased with the way it handles even large print jobs. And so have our users.”

Conclusion and Savings Summary

Six months after rolling out PrinterLogic company-wide, Indiana Farm Bureau is “really pleased” with PrinterLogic, citing ease of administration and ease of deployment as important factors in their satisfaction.

“Deployment was really fast,” says Hayes. “As part of our state-wide upgrade we had to install the WAN accelerator hardware, and that took a month, maybe two, but we had a very short time-frame for all of it. We were able to get PrinterLogic out faster than the rest of the project. I want to say it was about two weeks for all 138 offices.”

The organization has not yet conducted any hard analysis of return on investment (ROI), primarily because PrinterLogic was implemented in conjunction with the WAN accelerators. However, Hayes estimates that hundreds of aggregate hours have been saved compared to alternative print management solutions, thanks to PrinterLogic's efficient centralized management, its minimal server footprint, its avoidance of driver conflicts, and its overall ease of use for admins as well as end-users.

"Any other technician looking at what to purchase should view PrinterLogic as a no-brainer," she says. "It's going to save you time, headache and money. It was easy to deploy, and once that's stabilized, it's a set-it-and-forget-it type of printing solution."

435.652.1288

info@printerlogic.com

sales@printerlogic.com

CS_INDIANA-FARM-BUREAU-INSURANCE_FV2_120919

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