



Voice of the Customer Report

Discussion with Tony Asaro

Customer
UPMC

Vendor

 Verdiem.

Product
SURVEYOR

November 2009



The INI Group Voice of the Customer Reports

IT professionals find real value in the experiences of other customers in order to help inform their buying decisions. The Voice of the Customer (VoC) program is designed to provide insightful information for IT professionals to understand different products and services. The INI Group is a consulting firm with expertise in data storage, disaster recovery, data management, security and virtualization and we work closely with our customers to provide the VoC service.

Background

Tony Asaro of the INI Group interviewed Ryan Harvey, manager of the Desktop Design and Integration group and the asset and Lease Management group. This is how Ryan describes his role:

“I actually am a manager of two groups. One is called the desktop design and integration group and the other is asset and lease management. I've been with UPMC for almost five years now. I have responsibility for the majority of the desktop infrastructure. We're tasked with hardware selection, image creation, application packaging and deployment, security patching and response, management of our active directory system, pretty much the kitchen sink of the desktop enterprise falls underneath me.”

The following is an overview of UPMC's IT environment:

- Eight billion dollar global health enterprise
- Fifty thousand employees
- Operate twenty hospitals
- Forty-five thousand desktop pc's

Tony Asaro: Ryan - give us a background of your company.

Ryan Harvey: Sure, I work for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. We are actually an eight billion-dollar integrated global health enterprise. We're headquartered here in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania but we do have operations as far away as Italy. We are an organization of about fifty thousand employees that are based largely in western Pennsylvania and we operate twenty hospitals as a part of that operation and actually have about forty-five thousand computers as a part of that operation.

Tony Asaro: Wow, that's a huge operation. What's your role with the company?

Ryan Harvey: I actually am a manager of two groups. One is called the Desktop Design and Integration group and the other is Asset and Lease Management. I've been with UPMC for almost five years now. I have responsibility for the majority of the desktop infrastructure. We're tasked with hardware selection, image creation, application packaging and deployment, security patching and response, management of our active directory system, pretty much the kitchen sink of the desktop enterprise falls underneath me.

Tony Asaro: So you've implemented Verdiem Surveyor which is a PC power management solution. Why did you decide to go that way?

Ryan Harvey: Well it's kind of a win, win, win for us - if you will. We really were looking aggressively at some cost savings initiatives. At the same time though we weren't interested in reducing our overall environmental impact and then thirdly being a good corporate steward. We saw Verdiem as a win in all three of those categories and perhaps more importantly we saw us being able to absorb that return on investment with very minimal impact to overall IT operations and processes.

Tony Asaro: We speak to a lot of different IT organizations. How did you guys get to that revelation, I mean the idea that you wanted that corporate stewardship and you also wanted to impact the environment as well as reduce costs, everyone wants to do that, but the former things aren't as common.

Ryan Harvey: Yeah, we actually have a number of internal initiatives to improve UPMC's overall stewardship and standing within the region. Because we are the region's largest employer we feel as if we have an important role to play in demonstrating leadership with respect to environmental stewardship.

Tony Asaro: That's great. What was the process that you went through to implement Verdiem?

Ryan Harvey: HP actually introduced us to it and we, to be honest, didn't have that much interest in it at first - although it was kind of intriguing to us. We felt that it might be more harm than good and more bother than it was worth. But as we began to look at the product and review it we were quite impressed with just how mature the technology was. It was obvious that it wasn't something that was trying to jump on the environmental bandwagon. This was a company that really had done some due diligence and had put together a product and had really matured it over several years and we were kind of the beneficiary of that.

“We've been able to have kind of the best of both worlds with Verdiem. We can actually save the power over the weekend but wake the machine up for its normal maintenance cycle and not force the end user to sit through that on Monday morning.”

“They're [PCs] on when they need to be on and they're off when they can be off...”

“Once we did our three hundred seat pilot, we found out that we were able to directly confirm that we would save the kind of power that we would be able to save. We also noticed that there were almost no help desk calls related to it.”

Tony Asaro: At first you thought it might do some more harm than good. What process were you able to go through to get you over that hurdle?

Ryan Harvey: Sure. We actually piloted this on about thirty devices. We felt that putting the machines to sleep was actually something that's fairly easy to do. A number of us have done that at home for years. The problem is waking the PCs up later and not impacting the business. It's easy to put something to sleep over the weekend but if you have dozens of clinical staff that have to wake a machine up and then subsequently get all the patches and things that would've normally been off-hours right smack in the middle of the morning - you actually cause more harm and incur more cost than you save. And so in our first pilot of thirty devices, we were very pleased that the thirty folks who were actually involved in the pilot literally did not know that they were having power management deployed to their PC. In fact some of them noticed that their PC was on in the morning when it hadn't been on before.

Tony Asaro: And so it came on before they got into the office and it was all ready and waiting there for them.

Ryan Harvey: Exactly.

Tony Asaro: And that they actually probably like that or did they think that was unusual?

Ryan Harvey: No, they actually did like it. They noticed that not only did they not have to wake the machines up but they didn't have to wait for all the patches and deployments that might have taken place over the weekend. We've been able to have kind of the best of both worlds with Verdiem. We can actually save the power over the weekend but wake the machine up for its normal maintenance cycle and not force the end user to sit through that on Monday morning.

Tony Asaro: That's a very good point. So not only does it help you from a power management point of view but also just an ongoing management point of view for your PCs and your users.

Ryan Harvey: Exactly. They're on when they need to be on and they're off when they can be off if you understand the difference.

Tony Asaro: I like that. So now you've done those first thirty. You realize it didn't do more harm than good but actually did much more good. What was the next phase of rolling it out?

Ryan Harvey: Right. We ramped that up about tenfold. We chose one of our corporate areas for the next phase of our pilot and we actually put Verdiem on three hundred devices, allowed Verdiem to learn the usage profile of the devices in that area and then again implemented a power management profile that basically put the devices to sleep for about twelve hours a day. We found in reviewing the data that came back from that area that we had approximately twenty-three and a half hours of actual power consumption on a PC but less than twelve hours of actual usage. So we were almost doubling our actual power usage.

“Verdiem has been tremendously responsive when we did have a question or problem. We felt like they were a company that desired that we would succeed and that had our interests included in their overall interests.”

“...we actually purchased thirty thousand seats which is roughly two thirds of our enterprise and we actually have deployed all thirty thousand of those seats to our environment. We have not enabled all of them. We've enabled about three thousand of those thirty thousand.”

“...we actually are saving about forty to fifty percent of the previous power consumption...we had hoped to save about a million annually which is about ten million kWh annually and it looks like we're going to be right in line with that.”

Tony Asaro: Ryan, can you tell us how Verdiem Surveyor then improved the overall economic effectiveness within your IT operations?

Ryan Harvey: We were surprised at how easy it was to put PCs to sleep but make certain that they're awake for our maintenance cycles. We found that there were some proven cost savings right out of the gate. Once we did our three hundred seat pilot, we found out that we were able to directly confirm that we would save the kind of power that we would be able to save. We also noticed that there were almost no help desk calls related to it. We found out that most of folks did not realize that we were managing the power on their PC and that we were able to put it to sleep and wake it back up so that it wasn't at all impactful to their business.

Tony Asaro: I have this concept, Ryan that I call invisible IT. In most cases you want to be invisible to the user because when you are visible it's because problems are occurring - so in this case it was invisible to them.

Ryan Harvey: That's exactly right and that's the way we try to operate in all aspects of our IT operation and this dovetailed so nicely. Verdiem integrates with all of our major components. Verdiem has been tremendously responsive when we did have a question or problem. They were immediately responsive even before we purchased the product in any kind of bulk and so that was very encouraging to us. We felt like they were a company that desired that we would succeed and that had our interests included in their overall interests.

Tony Asaro: So you rolled out the three hundred. Have you rolled out beyond that?

Ryan Harvey: Yes we have. We actually finalized the purchase with the help of Duquesne Light. Our local energy company actually helped us purchase Verdiem and paid a percentage of it. And so we actually purchased thirty thousand seats which is roughly two thirds of our enterprise and we actually have deployed all thirty thousand of those seats to our environment. We have not enabled all of them. We've enabled about three thousand of those thirty thousand. We are collecting data on power consumption utilization on the other remaining twenty-seven thousand.

Tony Asaro: So, along those lines were you able to measure any sort of economic impact for you guys.

Ryan Harvey: Yes. We actually were. On the three thousand devices that we do have it enabled on, we actually are saving about forty to fifty percent of the previous power consumption and so our original estimates we had hoped to save about a million dollars annually which is about ten million kWh annually and it looks like we're going to be right in line with that. Our existing pilot, if you will of three thousand desktops fully enabled have simply served to confirm our original numbers.

“... because Verdiem allows us to remotely wake PCs with a simple website, we've actually solved a major help desk and support problem that we've had. People are actually able to turn their PCs on from home remotely and then be able to do work off-line off-hours. So that was a very unforeseen benefit.”

“It's the ability to selectively wake PCs either on an automated schedule or when the end-user needs to do so. That is much more difficult and that's where Verdiem really shines.”

“We've been able to manage both the rollout and then the enabling of Verdiem with almost no impact. We have not seen any kind of increased volume of helpdesk calls. We haven't had to shelve other projects to be able to get it out there. That was very important to us.”

Tony Asaro: Above and beyond the economic impact, has there been any other value that you see that Verdiem's brought to the table?

Ryan Harvey: Yeah, it has. We actually had an issue. We have an increasingly large number of mobile users who want to be able to remotely connect to their desktops at work and if someone for whatever reason turned off their PC before they left for the day, they weren't able to remotely connect to their PC. We have no wake on LAN capabilities because of some of the network requirements that we're not willing or not going to implement. And so, Verdiem, because people don't need to turn their PC off anymore they can allow it to go to sleep and because Verdiem allows us to remotely wake PCs with a simple website, we've actually solved a major help desk and support problem that we've had. People are actually able to turn their PCs on from home remotely and then be able to do work off-line off-hours. So that was a very unforeseen benefit. And in actuality we thought that it might be a problem. We thought that we might have people's machines going to sleep when they wanted to use them and in actuality, we actually solved, not caused a problem.

Tony Asaro: Right - so it really comes down to the fact that it's PC power management. The idea is that you can, you know, manage it on or off, based on what you need.

Ryan Harvey: Exactly. Putting PCs to sleep is very easy. In fact Windows does that pretty well by itself. It's the ability to selectively wake PCs either on an automated schedule or when the end-user needs to do so. That is much more difficult and that's where Verdiem really shines.

Tony Asaro: I think that you hit the nail on the head. It really is the whole management of that process. The sleep part is easy. It's the scheduled and elegant bringing it back online which is the important part.

Ryan Harvey: Right and we wanted to do this. Like most companies, I can't afford to hire three new people to be able to support this product and we have added exactly no staff, have not had to slow any other processes or procedures down from our group. We've been able to manage both the rollout and then the enabling of Verdiem with almost no impact. We have not seen any kind of increased volume of helpdesk calls. We haven't had to shelve other projects to be able to get it out there. That was very important to us. It's wonderful if you can save money on power but if it's going to cost me the same amount of money and resources and staffing, then it's not a win.

Tony Asaro: Very good. You also mentioned earlier that it had other impact in your organization as well from a corporate stewardship point of view and from an environmental point of view. Can you expand on that a little bit?

Ryan Harvey: If you've been watching the news, we just had the G-20 [The Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors] here a couple of months ago and UPMC was trying to highlight in advance of that some of our overall stewardship and this was of a big win for us, a feather in our cap to be able to say that we are actively and aggressively trying to reduce power consumption across our entire enterprise. It really paints UPMC in a good light, shows that we think about more than just our prophets. Certainly healthcare is first and foremost in our minds but we do want to improve our overall stewardship and the impression that our own customers and our own competitors have of us in our region and around the world.

“Certainly healthcare is first and foremost in our minds but we do want to improve our overall stewardship and the impression that our own customers and our own competitors have of us in our region and around the world.”

“...if you're a Microsoft shop and you use things like Active Directory and Configuration Manager to do deployments, Verdiem Surveyor integrates with both of those components almost seamlessly and we were extremely impressed with how we could leverage our existing implementations of both Active Directory and a SCCM [System Center Configuration Manager] to be able to both deploy and then subsequently manage the Verdiem Surveyor product.”

Tony Asaro: Right and from a point of view of where I said that IT wants to be invisible most of the time, in this case, IT can be visible and it's a good thing.

Ryan - can you give us any insights on Verdiem that would be useful for other IT professionals that are just now considering this solution.

Ryan Harvey: Yeah, one of the biggest things that I think people will notice if they're IT savvy is just how easy it is to manage and integrate. The console is extremely easy to use. There's no learning curve. It's very easy to ramp up and become an expert very quickly. And if you're a Microsoft shop and you use things like Active Directory and Configuration Manager to do deployments, Verdiem Surveyor integrates with both of those components almost seamlessly and we were extremely impressed with how we could leverage our existing implementations of both Active Directory and a SCCM [System Center Configuration Manager] to be able to both deploy and then subsequently manage the Verdiem Surveyor product.

Tony Asaro: What was the deployment like over a thousand systems?

Ryan Harvey: We did it in one weekend. We didn't actually enable them yet in most cases but when we deployed to in sort of a listening mode, if you will, where they begin to report back the active power management settings and the overall usage, we actually deployed that in one shot one night on a weekend without any issues. Part of that is, I suppose, a testimony to my team but the product itself installs very easily. We didn't have to troubleshoot any installation problems and the product reports back to a central server without any issue. And because it uses group policies and other things in Active Directory to actually leverage the configuration settings and the overall set up of it, we didn't have to do a whole lot of work outside of it. We were able to leverage what we already had to get it out there.

Tony Asaro: Who owns the power bill in your company?

Ryan Harvey: It's distributed to some extent although we have two primary power providers so the facilities folks were very encouraged when we began to look at this project. That's something that may need to be considered by a given enterprise because typically it will be the IT folks who will possibly incur the cost of purchasing Verdiem and then installing Verdiem but it's often the facilities folks who are going to see the benefit fiscally and so there needs to be some kind of cooperation and understanding between those two groups that one may incur some costs but it's going to be to the benefit of another group.

Tony Asaro: Right and in your case were the facility guys able to help offset some of the cost for you?

Ryan Harvey: Yeah, we actually had them fund the purchase of Verdiem with Duquesne Light's help out of a green IT cost savings initiative and so we actually use the facilities folks to do the lion share of the purchase.

“typically it will be the IT folks who will possibly incur the cost of purchasing Verdiem and then installing Verdiem but it's often the facilities folks who are going to see the benefit fiscally so there needs to be some kind of cooperation and understanding between those two groups that one may incur some costs but it's going to be to the benefit of another group.”

“One of the things that we really like about Verdiem Surveyor is the reporting capabilities that are on the backend. It makes it so easy to produce executive friendly or executive digestible reports...”

“It's nearly a zero impact implementation and it's so rare that you can actually say that about a product. That this is actually a product that actually works even better than promised; the phrase that we've used around here is all gain, no pain.”

Tony Asaro: Very good. So what are the next steps with Verdiem Surveyor?

Ryan Harvey: Well, we've got two different next steps. We are continuing to work with each major facility to verify their power consumption and then we intend to actually enable it on those devices so that we can begin immediately seeing the benefit. Then we intend to report our results. One of the things that we really like about Verdiem Surveyor is the reporting capabilities that are on the backend. It makes it so easy to produce executive friendly or executive digestible reports as far as IT power consumption across the enterprise and so we intend to aggressively report our results to show that we are really are saving power the way we thought we would.

Tony Asaro: Ryan, would you recommend Verdiem Surveyor to other IT professionals and can you tell us why?

Ryan Harvey: I would. It's nearly a zero impact implementation and it's so rare that you can actually say that about a product. That this is actually a product that actually works even better than promised; the phrase that we've used around here is all gain, no pain. It's a win in so many areas and with so little impact; impact to IT, impact to end users, that it's almost a no-brainer. It has been so successful with literally so little effort that I would recommend it without reservation to another company.

“It's a win in so many areas and with so little impact; impact to IT, impact to end users, that it's almost a no-brainer. It has been so successful with literally so little effort that I would recommend it without reservation to another company.”



The INI Group provides expertise and experience in IT working closely with end users and vendors to provide real world experiences. The goal is to share insights and information first hand from IT professionals with their peers.

Voice of the Customer is a service provided by the INI Group using our experts to interview IT professionals directly. For more information go to www.VoicesofIT.com

All trademark names are property of their respective companies. Information contained in this document has been obtained by sources The INI Group LLC (INI) considers to be reliable but is not warranted by INI. This document may contain opinions of INI, which are subject to change from time to time. This publication is copyrighted by The INI Group, LLC and is intended only for use by persons who have purchased it directly from INI. Any reproduction or redistribution of this document, in whole or in part, whether in hard-copy format, electronically, or otherwise to persons not authorized to receive it, without the express consent of the INI Group, LLC is in violation of U.S. copyright law and will be subject to an action for civil damages and, if applicable, criminal prosecution.