



Windows Vista Partner Solution Case Study



Partner: Catapult Systems

Web Site: www.catapultsystems.com

Partner Size: 250 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services—IT services

Partner Profile

Based in Austin, Texas, Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner Catapult Systems helps enterprises implement Microsoft technologies and business solutions.

Software and Services

- Windows Vista Enterprise
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Enterprise 2007
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition
 - Microsoft SQL Server 2005 Standard Edition
 - Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager 2007
- Microsoft Application Compatibility Toolkit 5.0
- Microsoft Office Migration Planning Manager

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IT Firm Helps Global Company Convert Critical Files to Work with New Client Software

“There are more Group Policy objects available in Windows Vista that can be used for more detailed control of Office at the desktop. Windows Vista ... reduces the support burden.”

David Welch, Practice Director, Core Infrastructure, Catapult Systems

A global energy company asked Catapult Systems to ensure that its business-critical trading files and applications would be compatible with new Windows Vista® and Microsoft® Office 2007 programs. Catapult designed a solution to locate and convert files so that the customer could protect its information assets and meet its deployment deadline. With the software upgrade, the customer gains enhanced productivity and a more controlled desktop.

Business Needs

Catapult Systems is a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner and National Systems Integrator. One of its customers, a global energy company, decided to deploy the Windows Vista® Enterprise operating system and Microsoft® Office Enterprise 2007 to its entire enterprise, and notified its business divisions to prepare for the change. More than five years had passed since the energy company had last updated its client operating system and productivity software—the Windows® 2000 operating system and Microsoft Office 2000—and it wanted to take advantage of current products.

The energy company's financial division started the mandated deployment in 2007, but suspended the project when it discovered it had thousands of incompatible customized spreadsheets. The department's traders, who use spreadsheets as their primary line-of-business tools, engaged Catapult Systems to help ensure that their older files would work with the upgraded programs. What made this a particular challenge is that the employees had extensively modified the Microsoft Office Excel® 2000 spreadsheet software running on their workstations with add-ins from



vendors and programs they had written themselves.

“It was a very complicated project,” says David Welch, Practice Director, Core Infrastructure, at Catapult Systems. “Employees had an extremely high-number of homegrown applications that had not been maintained over the years. There were literally thousands of files and hundreds of customized applications that needed remediation.”

The financial division had files and software stored on 10 servers and approximately 3,000 workstations. Before continuing the client software deployment, the division wanted Catapult Systems to perform a complete inventory and locate all incompatible programs and documents. “Our job was to go in, find out where they were exposed, and help them mitigate those risks,” says Welch.

Solution

In August 2008, Catapult began using the Microsoft Application Compatibility Toolkit and the Microsoft Office Migration Planning Manager at each workstation to identify applications and files that might not work with the new products, and to convert most unmodified files to the new formats. More extensively customized applications would require manual analysis and intervention.

The tools found files installed with commercial add-ins, and Catapult wrote scripts to identify add-ins created by approximately 500 different employees. The Microsoft partner also helped the customer use a Microsoft Office Migration Planning Manager scanning tool to find Office files located on its servers. “We found about 50,000 Office files on servers, and determined if they contained embedded macros or features that would

make them incompatible with the new client software,” says Welch.

Catapult then needed to cross-reference the accumulated information with the inventory data managed by the financial division; that way, Catapult could identify which workstations were using incompatible files and software, and the customer could decide whether to keep or discard them. To analyze and classify the information, Catapult designed a database built with Microsoft SQL Server® 2005 Standard Edition data management software running on the Windows Server 2003 Standard Edition operating system.

After spending two months evaluating the data with its customer, Catapult began converting files and custom applications to the new format. The ongoing remediation includes rewriting applications when necessary, or updating add-ins. In some cases, Catapult is designing new add-ins to replace commercial products that are no longer available. In the meantime, the financial division has started deploying Windows Vista and the Office 2007 suite, and it expects to meet the goal for full deployment by the end of 2009.

Benefits

Catapult Systems is helping its customer continue to benefit from existing investments by ensuring that its older critical files and applications are now compatible with Windows Vista and Office 2007. In fact, new features in these products are expected to make work easier for both IT administrators and office employees.

Protected Investment

By using a customized migration strategy, Catapult was able to ensure that its customer’s employees can continue to use

older, business-critical files and applications while taking advantage of the enhanced features and user interfaces of Windows Vista and Office 2007. “I think that working with existing files with Windows Vista and Office 2007 will be a good surprise,” Welch says. “For example, using the [Office Fluent™] Ribbon really improves the experience, especially for those people who aren’t power users.”

Strengthened Control

The wide-scale deployment was challenging, because employees have had broad authority in the past to make changes to client applications. Now that existing applications and files are integrated with the new software, the company has better control and a more standardized technology environment. Users can no longer install customized macros, and all software is distributed through Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager 2007. “There are more Group Policy objects available in Windows Vista that can be used for more detailed control of Office at the desktop,” Welch says. “Windows Vista helps centralize administration and reduces the support burden in the field.”

Broadened Opportunities for Optimization

Catapult is prepared to help other customers realize the benefits of simplified management and a more standardized IT environment. Welch says, “This project with Windows Vista has provided Catapult with the opportunity to build our services offering for clients who are moving increasingly toward a more managed, optimized desktop environment.”