Capgemini BPO deploys hybrid thin client solution with Ubuntu Advantage

Ubuntu provides improved security, flexibility and performance with simplified IT management

**Fast facts**

**Organisation:**

![Capgemini Logo]

**Industry:** Business process outsourcing

**Country:** Worldwide

**Challenge:**
- Non standardised infrastructure
- Multiple localised support teams
- Complex, time-consuming IT management

**Solution:**
- Standardised, global IT services model
- Cost effective mobile devices used as hybrid thin client devices
- Working from alternate locations enabled
- Common Ubuntu image
- Capgemini BPO and customer applications via remote services
- Ubuntu Advantage Landscape systems management tool

**Results:**
- ISO 27001 accreditation
- Enhanced control and protection of customer data
- Centralised IT infrastructure
- Rapid, flexible IT deployment
- Enhanced business continuity

**Summary**

Capgemini’s Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) solutions have helped some of the world’s largest, multinational corporations transform their business processes in the areas of finance and accounting, customer operations management, human resources, procurement, supply chain management, sustainability, and social media management. To manage IT costs, increase efficiencies and improve customer satisfaction for client engagements, it was decided to replace the non-standard end user equipment and management around the world with a single, global, standardised IT services model – which became known as the Model Delivery Center (MDC) thin client concept. Using a hybrid thin-client approach with cost-effective devices, the Ubuntu 10.04 LTS operating system, and applications as web services, the MDC has delivered a secure and flexible platform that fulfils the key requirements for BPO service delivery.

**Challenge**

For global organisations, IT complexity is a constant challenge. Disparate hardware, software and processes lead to high costs and duplicated management effort. By standardising infrastructure and creating cost-effective and centrally managed IT solutions, organisations can save time and manage cost and dramatically improve the experience for internal users and customers.

These were the objectives for Capgemini’s world-leading business process outsourcing (BPO) division, which has offices worldwide.

Paweł Zięba, Senior IT Innovation Consultant at Capgemini BPO, says: “In the past, BPO offices in different countries built their own IT infrastructures and solutions to meet local customers’ needs. To reduce complexity and minimise infrastructure costs, we needed to replace disparate hardware and software infrastructure around the world with a single, standardised, global IT delivery model.”
Solution
To realise its vision, Capgemini BPO designed and built an IT solution known as the Model Delivery Center (MDC) thin client concept. By eliminating the need for local infrastructure and applications at BPO offices worldwide, the thin client concept has improved Capgemini BPO’s efficiency, simplified management and enhanced the end user experience. What’s more, the hybrid thin-client approach means data remains on customers’ servers at all times, ensuring high levels of data security.

“We now use the same, secure IT solution to deliver outsourced business services for all customer engagements globally,” says Zięba. “There’s no more need for costly regional infrastructure and high-spec, fat-client devices,” he adds. “Instead, we simply give people cost effective devices running Ubuntu to access remote services and cloud applications.”

The thin client concept is based on standardised, hybrid thin-client devices (commercial off the shelf mobile PCs), a single software image; centralised configuration and monitoring tools; and remote access to applications hosted in the cloud or in customers’ datacentres. Key software installed on the thin client software image includes Ubuntu, remote clients, a web browser, a VPN client and a SIP software telephone.

The mobility of the thin client devices in conjunction with the level of data security allows for a flexible ‘working from alternate locations’ approach in business continuity situations at a minimised risk for data loss.

In its first year, the MDC thin client concept has been extended to over 1,000 employees working on a number of customer engagements around the world. This number will be ramped up to 3,000 users over the next three years, with an eventual target of more than 10,000. In addition, all new engagements will roll out on this architecture as standard.

The single, global software image for the MDC thin client concept is based on the Ubuntu 10.04 Long Term Support (LTS) operating system. “I’ve never found a better, more secure, more user-friendly and flexible alternative to Ubuntu Linux for the desktop, which is why we chose it as our global standard,” says Zięba.

To get the best performance from its Ubuntu desktops, Capgemini BPO subscribes to the Ubuntu Advantage service from Canonical – the company behind Ubuntu. “Canonical helps us to eliminate the business impact with rapid response and resolution of outstanding issues, and make sure our devices deliver optimum performance,” says Zięba. “What’s more, Ubuntu Advantage gives us access to Landscape, an intuitive system for managing and configuring our Ubuntu devices from a central point in the cloud.”

In addition to standardised devices running the Ubuntu operating system, Capgemini BPO users also access cloud-based collaboration tools for email, messaging, PIM, office applications, document sharing, storage and communications.

Results
A standardised, global IT platform using Ubuntu
Capgemini BPO has created a standardised, global IT platform for reliable, secure, cost-effective service delivery. “Capgemini’s MDC thin client concept concept shows how Ubuntu can help organisations replace disparate infrastructure globally by providing a high performance and simplified alternative” says Jane Silber, CEO at Canonical. “Ubuntu is lean, simple to customise, secure, easy to use and constantly available to provide the best possible end user and customer experience,” she adds, “and it is delivering great results for Capgemini’s BPO.”

High security for customer data
While the MDC thin-client approach protects customer data, Capgemini BPO has added extra layers of security using Ubuntu. As a result, the solution is fully compliant with ISO 27001 Information Security Management.

“We customised Ubuntu to wipe all data saved locally on desktops or notebooks every time users log out, ensuring sensitive customer data can never go astray,” says Zięba. “We also configured the system to prevent users saving sensitive customer data to flash drives in cameras or other devices – which we achieved with just a single click in Ubuntu.”

Enhanced business continuity
The mobility of the MDC’s user equipment in conjunction with the highly secured Ubuntu image allows for a higher degree of flexibility and shorter reaction times in a business continuity situation: service delivery can be easily continued from alternate locations at a minimised risk for data loss.

Enhanced end-user productivity
Ubuntu is helping BPO employees work more productively. “Our end users immediately noticed that Ubuntu boots-up, opens apps, and runs much faster than Windows, even on older legacy hardware. The transition from fat-client to thin-client has actually resulted in improved performance” says Zięba.

Rapid user acceptance
Ubuntu is extremely user friendly, providing a smooth transition to the MDC. “Most of our end users have grown up on Windows, but they were all able to begin working with the new system quickly with little training,” says Zięba. “Because we now access applications as web services, users simply open their browsers in Ubuntu and choose the tools they need – it couldn’t be simpler for them.”
Reduced IT management
Ubuntu’s Landscape systems management and monitoring tool has helped the BPO IT Innovation Team enhance management efficiency. “Previously, we needed lots of people to deploy, maintain, upgrade and support infrastructure at our offices around the world,” says Zięba. “A team of five administrative staff manage several thousand desktop licenses through Landscape and they are responsible for creating, managing and developing our MDC software image worldwide.”

Increased deployment flexibility
With the MDC, Capgemini BPO can deploy the infrastructure needed for new customer engagements quickly and cost effectively. What’s more, different elements of the service can be distributed between global offices, helping to ensure business continuity and provide the right mix of specialist skills and office workers.

To increase flexibility still further, the BPO IT Innovation Team plans test about home working – delivering a standard IT experience from employees’ own PCs and notebooks. “It is possible to provide our software image on a memory stick, enabling employees to transform their own devices into secure office devices whenever they need to,” says Zięba. “In the immediate future, all users working on Ubuntu 10.04 will be migrated to the Ubuntu 12.04 Long Term Support release,” says Zięba. “We are really looking forward to making the move, and reaping the benefits of the enhanced functionality and ease of use built-in to the Unity desktop”.

Shaping the future of Ubuntu
Canonical works closely with Capgemini’s BPO division to take on suggestions for new Ubuntu functionality. “As enterprise Ubuntu users ourselves, we often have ideas for new features and functionality,” says Zięba, “Several of these have already been picked up by Canonical, including improved access management and simplified reporting in upcoming versions of Landscape.”