



Freehills

Customer profile

An international law firm with offices in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region

Industry

Legal

IT environment

Freehills has 1,000 virtualized desktops hosted across the firm's two Sydney data centers

Challenge

To provide remote access to key corporate systems in a flexible manner but without compromising user experience or system and data security

McAfee solution

McAfee® Management for Optimized Virtual Environments (MOVE) AntiVirus

Results

- Provides security for virtualized desktops without compromising performance
- Enables employees to work remotely from any Internet-connected computer without sacrificing security or effectiveness
- Supports flexible work practices and gives the firm a definite advantage in the recruitment and retention of top talent

McAfee MOVE AntiVirus Secures Virtualized Desktops without Compromising Performance at International Law Firm

Freehills is an Australian international law firm that serves more than 75 percent of Australia's top 100-listed companies and provides high-level commercial advice to leading corporations around the globe. Regarded as one of the "Big Six" national law firms, Freehills has more than 200 partners and employs approximately 1,000 lawyers and a similar number of support staff across its offices in Australia and Southeast Asia.

A number of remote access options are available to staff, including corporate laptops via VPN, BlackBerry smartphones, and Outlook Web Access, yet the firm was keen to extend and improve these offerings. The challenge for IT, given the broad spectrum of applications, devices, and usage requirements, was to provide even greater flexibility but without compromising security. Another goal was alignment with the firm's business continuity goals. Central to its goals was the need to get staff back up and running as soon as possible in a crisis scenario.

Goal: The Best Possible Experience for Users Working Remotely

With these requirements in mind, Freehills IT began looking for a virtual desktop solution that would enable users to access the corporate network and core application set from any Internet-connected computer, either PC or Mac, as well as from tablet devices such as iPads. "Our goal was to provide—securely and efficiently—the best possible experience for our remote users," says Simon Gaut, infrastructure manager at Freehills. "We wanted them to be as effective at home or on the road as they are in the office."

However, as the company investigated and then piloted two of the leading virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) solutions, it became evident that deploying traditional endpoint security software within each virtual machine severely impacted the host device's CPU and memory, creating a poor user experience. "Forgoing antivirus protection for users of virtualized desktops was simply not an option. We needed to provide the high level of security we've experienced with McAfee VirusScan® Enterprise software across our corporate desktops, but without impacting the user experience" explains Gaut.

Solution: Optimized Security Platform for Virtualized Desktop Environments

Following a six-month pilot and an extensive review process, Freehills selected Citrix XenDesktop 5 as its VDI solution and to protect the virtualized desktops against malware, McAfee Management for Optimized Virtual Environments (MOVE) AntiVirus. The McAfee MOVE platform provides agile, service-oriented security, optimized specifically for virtualized environments. McAfee MOVE AntiVirus, an add-on component to the McAfee VirusScan Enterprise engine, is optimized to support on-access scans and update functions within virtualized desktop environments, greatly reducing the infrastructure impacts experienced with traditional antivirus deployments.

"Following a brief trial, we worked swiftly to get [McAfee] MOVE into our production environment and were absolutely delighted with the results," announces Gaut, "[McAfee] MOVE AntiVirus didn't even

show up in the top 50 CPU processes. It had that little impact on CPU performance.”

Prior to the Citrix-McAfee solution being rolled out more broadly, the project team undertook detailed analysis to identify those employees that would benefit most from the technology. The key determining factors were:

- Involvement with the firm's business continuity work stream
- Frequency of travel
- Frequency of VPN usage

Safe, Remote Access to Corporate Documents without Compromised Performance

The Citrix desktops contain the firm's core application set, including Microsoft Office and the firm's document management system, Autonomy iManage. Expert, the firm's time and billing system, and the corporate Intranet are also available. It has the exact look and feel of a standard desktop. “Our staff are immediately familiar with the desktop and are now able to work at any time on almost any device,” states Gaut. “It's a 24/7 solution with a lot of resiliency built into it.”

Currently, the firm has more than 650 regular Citrix users and over the course of a typical week, would see in excess of 1,000 separate user sessions. Frequent travelers and staff members who would previously have used corporate laptops and VPN are the obvious beneficiaries. However, partners and others involved in the firm's business continuity management group are now better prepared should a natural or other disaster disrupt normal office operations. If, for example, the firm was to lose access to an office, the Citrix-McAfee solution would enable the rapid provisioning of hundreds of virtual machines to support displaced staff.

Extremely Satisfied Users

Freehills users are delighted about being able to access a standard desktop remotely with all the applications they need and no lag time. “One partner recently stated that the Citrix-McAfee solution is the best technology IT has ever implemented,” reports Gaut. “That gives you an idea of how well it has been received.

A number of staff members have also commented that the performance when using Citrix from home is now on par with the in-office experience.”

Recruiting Advantage

Junior lawyers at Freehills are also reaping the benefits of the Citrix-McAfee solution. Before the introduction of virtual desktops, they would often work late at the office because they did not yet have a corporate laptop. Now, however, they have the flexibility of working from home on personal machines while accessing a familiar-looking desktop.

This ability to take work home helps Freehills differentiate itself from other law firms, especially in its efforts to recruit younger lawyers. “Knowing at the outset that they have the potential to work from home can be a significant selling point, particularly to those seeking greater flexibility in their work/life balance,” reveals Gaut.

Safe Access from Mobile Devices

At Freehills, a growing number of employees are purchasing their own Apple iPads, Android devices, and other non-corporate tablets and smartphones. Consequently, the firm is looking at McAfee Enterprise Mobile Management (McAfee EMM™), which would bring the same level of security and control to mobile devices that IT provides to its laptops and desktops.

In the meantime, IT takes comfort in the fact that, with the Citrix Receiver installed on an employee's iPad, the user can access the firm's Citrix-McAfee environment without any corporate data ever residing on the device.

An Enthusiastic Endorsement

“I would absolutely recommend McAfee MOVE for anyone looking to protect a virtual desktop environment,” declares Gaut. “It has enabled Freehills to deploy virtual desktops flexibly and securely, in a way that makes both users and IT happy. Even though we've only used them for a short time, virtual desktops have already been a huge advantage to our firm.”

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—Simon Gaut
Infrastructure Manager
Freehills

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