

75% fewer workstations? Read on

So many ideas and so little time! It is impossible to convey to you everything that transpired at the 2010 Consumer Electronics Show, so I will pick a couple of technologies over my next several blogs and tell you about them.

One of the most challenging decisions an institution can make has to do with purchase applications that require a smart desk top computer or a thin client workstation. There are benefits to both given the application, and with server virtualization; the choices came become complicated. Well not anymore.

Enter in NComputing. Quietly they have captured 15% of the K-12 school market when it comes to workstations, and during the current buying cycle they are expecting to increase their total market share to 20%.

The concept of NComputing's technology is similar to server virtualization. To explain, server virtualization is the ability to run more than one application on a server, thus maximizing its unused CPU computing power.

NComputing takes that same concept and applies it to individual computer workstations. For a good example of the implications, think of a typical school computer lab. It will have one workstation per desk with an average class size of 26 in middle school. This can become very expensive for most districts particularly when workstations are replaced on a three-to-five year cycle.

NComputing (www.ncomputing.com) recognized that like servers, most workstations utilize only a small portion of their available CPU power. The company developed a USB virtual desktop device called a plug and play connector (model U170) that can network the 25 lab workstations to one desktop computer. In essence, it is a computer-sharing or CPU-sharing device that maximizes the available computing power of one workstation for a group of networked users and it is totally cool and easy to implement. The critical aspect of this new technology is that each desk only needs a keyboard, monitor, and the NComputing connectivity device. (By the way, the device costs significantly less than a smart or thin-client workstation.) With this new technology, school districts don't have to purchase 26 computers, only one. The long-term cost and support savings are huge. No wonder NComputing's market share is growing at such a rate.

How banks could put this concept to work

Take the average branch configuration. Let's say you have five walk-up windows in the lobby and three at the drive-up window or motor bank for a total of eight workstations. With NComputing's model all you would need is one, but let's say two so you can have a back-up in case the primary workstation fails. That's a 75% reduction in workstations and in the associated end-user support. But this new technology can be applied to any departmental or functional computing pool.

OK, the implications here are huge. Hold those POs! No computer at your institution should be purchase until you have had the opportunity to check out NComputing and their technology. You will be glad you did and then send me a text message and tell me how great it is!

— Dan Fisher, The Wombat!

About the Author

Dan Fisher is president and CEO of The Copper River Group, a consulting firm headquartered in Fargo, N. D., that focuses on technology and payment systems research and consulting for community financial institutions. For nearly 30 years, Fisher has worked in the financial industry using technology to improve the bottom line. He was CIO of Community First Bankshares (now part of BancWest), has served as a director of the Federal Reserve Board of Minneapolis, the chairman of the American Bankers Association Payment Systems Committee, and was a member of the Independent Community Bankers of America Payments Committee. Fisher has written numerous articles on banking technology and the payments system. He has authored or co-authored six books and recently published a book titled, "Capturing Your Customer! The New Technology of Remote Deposit." You can contact Fisher at dan@copperwombat.com.

P.S. To understand Dan's nickname, check out "About the Wombat" on his website, www.copperwombat.co