

UNIDESK CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

JENNER & BLOCK

Jenner and Block: Enhancing the User Experience and Application Management with Award-Winning VDI

Global law firm Jenner and Block has won awards for its 1,400-user "NextJen" desktop and application virtualization project. Unidesk is at the heart of the VDI deployment, managing and delivering more than 140 of the firm's key apps.



"As an international law firm, we are committed to staying on top of innovation. So for our VDI initiative, we wanted to create an end user experience with a consistent look and feel independent of device, platform or location. With Unidesk and Pure Storage, we have succeeded in gaining the advocacy of even our most difficult users, while simplifying application and desktop delivery for IT. We couldn't have done it without these technologies."

Amol Bargaje
Chief Information Officer, Jenner and Block



At the Forefront of Innovation



Jenner & Block's Chicago Office

Jenner and Block is a premier global law firm headquartered in Chicago with offices in London, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington DC. The firm counts more than 500 lawyers among its 1,400 employees, and its clients range from the top ranks of the Fortune 500 to large privately held corporations and financial services institutions to emerging companies, family-run businesses, and individuals.

Jenner and Block's core values include commitment to innovation and excellence in serving clients. From an IT perspective, aligning with these values means giving attorneys and staff reliable, high-performance access to Windows desktops and applications independent of device, platform, or location.

A new virtual desktop infrastructure comprised of best-in-class solutions from [Unidesk](#), [Pure Storage](#), Cisco, HP, and [VMware](#) is enabling Jenner and Block to stay on top of innovation and meet its "client-first" requirements.

Unidesk is at the heart of the VDI deployment, providing essential [application management](#), [Windows patching](#), [personalization](#), storage optimization, and break/fix capabilities in one powerful, easy-to-use solution. More than 150 applications are being managed and delivered to the VMware-hosted virtual desktops with Unidesk, all in different combinations with the firm's single instance of Windows 7.

Building a Business Case for the "NextJen Experience"

The "NextJen Experience," as the project is called internally, was led by CIO Amol Bargaje and other key members of his "VDI Dream Team." Jenner and Block's ability to achieve 100% desktop and application virtualization is due in large part to the cross-functional team that was assembled to execute the project.



Amol Bargaje
Chief Information Officer
Jenner & Block



Chad Rissman
Manager of Applications
Jenner & Block



Anne Gallagher
Marketing Communications
Manager
Jenner & Block



Andy Bradford
Desktop Engineer
Jenner & Block



Mark Mast
Desktop Engineer
Jenner & Block



Brad Burnett
Network Engineer
Jenner & Block

The VDI Dream Team

The initial step in the firm's VDI journey was building a business case for desktop virtualization. IT provided senior management with four solid reasons for going down the VDI path and choosing Unidesk as its application management platform.

#1. Deliver applications independent of the endpoint device.

Explains Amol, "Earlier this decade, we were doing a hardware refresh when our firm's management asked if we could deploy Macs throughout the firm. The answer was no because most of our legal applications are Windows-based. But this got us thinking about how we could deliver all applications independent of device or platform. After some research, we found that desktop virtualization technology had matured to the point where we could now deliver Windows desktops remotely to any device. And that new technologies like Unidesk would make it easy to virtualize all of our apps, which has been a major problem in the past with VDI implementations of any scale."

#2. Provide a consistent look and feel whether attorneys and staff are working at the main office, remotely with clients, or from home.

Says Amol, "Our lawyers are always on the move. Being able to resume working from where they left off and having a Windows workspace that always has the same look and feel is critical to their productivity and to providing high quality client service. With VDI, we could provide this consistency no matter what endpoint device they are using."

#3. Reduce downtime due to a myriad of desktop issues, such as user customizations creating conflicts with IT-installed applications and patches to Windows or applications causing unexpected problems.

Comments Amol, "We simply cannot afford downtime. With physical PCs, undoing a problematic patch or trying to diagnose and fix a problem caused by user personalization could take hours. That takes time and resource away from my IT team, and renders the end user unproductive during that time. With Unidesk virtual disk container technology, we would be able to correct bad patches in a few minutes by simply rolling changes back. We would get that same level of control for user personalization as well."

#4. Enhance security. Centralizing all applications and data in the data center with VDI would provide a significant improvement over physical endpoints.

Adds Amol, "There were some situations where people forgot their laptops at an airport or in a coffee shop. We wanted our client data to be secure so that in the event of a lost or stolen device, no sensitive client data is lost. VDI would enable us to manage and protect our data better, enable more secure file transfers, and make it accessible from anywhere."

A Best of Breed Approach

Jenner and Block adopted a best of breed approach to VDI, partnering with vendors who have leading technology, proven success in the market, and first class customer support organizations. The law firm settled on the combination of all-flash storage from Pure Storage and application management software from Unidesk for a reliable, high-performance virtual desktop experience that is easy to implement, manage, and scale. Other key elements of the VDI solution include VMware vSphere virtualization and Horizon desktop virtualization software, Cisco servers, and HP zero clients.

Explains Brad Burnett, Network Engineer at Jenner and Block, "Our VDI is centrally located in a colocation facility in the suburbs of Chicago. We have two Pure Storage arrays - one for production and the other is for DR - that we replicate using Pure's replication. We have 6.37 TB storage available for our 1,400 desktops but we're using only 2.46 TB - mostly because we are getting 11.8:1 data reduction with Pure's dedupe and compression, and a smaller storage footprint with Unidesk sharing the same application and OS virtual disk layers across many VMs."

Unidesk application management software is enabling the law firm to deliver all apps to all users without creating extra images to manage. Every app and the Windows operating system are provisioned and updated once, no matter how many different app combinations are needed. Each app and the Windows OS itself are captured with an ordinary installation as a virtual disk container called a "layer." Layers are then assigned to and shared by multiple desktops.

Explains Chad Rissman, Manager of Applications, "We have been able to layer 99.9% of our apps with Unidesk. Microsoft Office Suite, Google Chrome, Foxit Reader, FireFox, Goverlan, Java, Printers, iScrub, BigHand, eDocs document management, finance specific apps like LMS and Cognos for budgeting, marketing specific apps like Adobe Creative Cloud, and third party plugins for Word and Outlook are among the 140+ apps that can be added and removed from any set of virtual machines with just a few clicks. Our developer group also maintains 15 or so custom apps that we layer with Unidesk as well."

With Unidesk's Cross-Layer Merge technology, apps can be layered separately from the Windows OS and other apps, and assigned in any order or combination so that they can interoperate the same as if they were locally installed.

Says Andy Bradford, Desktop Engineer, "We looked at traditional app virtualization technologies like ThinApp and other layering technologies like [App Volumes](#) but we couldn't get our document management software OpenText to work and integrate with Word properly. These other technologies force you to put apps that need to interoperate in the same package whereas with Unidesk you just layer them separately and assign them to VMs, and they just work. Unidesk even allows us to layer device drivers. This translates into less effort and less cost for us in IT, not only in terms of updating our apps, but updating Windows, too. We don't have any extra gold images to patch. All 1,400 desktops are based on the same OS layer. "

Deploying 1,400 Virtual Desktops

Jenner and Block's VDI team kicked off the project with a small proof of concept that included themselves and others in IT. This "eat your own dog food" approach is often the best way to identify early issues that could hinder widespread adoption.

Next came the conference room test drive.

Explains Chad, "We assembled all of the CXOs, partners, and key stakeholders from various departments in a conference room and showed them the VDI solution. We took their feedback and made some adjustments based on what they told us."

The conference room test drive slowly transitioned into a full-fledged pilot that included the firm's first end users, followed by the attorneys.

Says Chad, "We focused on a lot of the important attorneys, and tested with both the best and worst users to make sure that VDI would work for all of them."

In another innovative approach, the Jenner and Block VDI team picked their most remote office for their first production deployment.

Explains Chad, "We started the rollout in our LA office. We deliberately picked the office that was furthest away so we could be sure that performance was good from a latency standpoint."

The LA office rollout was followed by virtual desktop deployments in the New York and Washington, DC offices. The Chicago headquarters was the last one to get VDI. Rollouts took place after the official close of business, after 5 pm Monday through Thursday.

Comments Chad, "We deployed about 45 desktops a night and the next day the team came in and hit the floors so that everyone who got the desktops were briefed on what VDI was, how to use the zero clients, and how to use the laptop out of the office. We wanted to make user adoption as easy as possible."

Marketing and Selling VDI Internally

The VDI team used a number of innovative marketing techniques to sell VDI internally, but made sure they started with buy-in from the top.

Explains Amol, "We made sure that we had the right people in the room every step of the way. We wanted more communication than less. We also made sure that we had firm-wide collaboration and participation. During all of the pilots, our priority was to have representation from each office and every staff level. CxO and influential partners were engaged early on so that we had senior-level buy-in."

The internal marketing campaigns were headed up by Anne Gallagher, the firm's external marketing communications manager, who was enlisted to be part of the VDI "Dream Team." She incorporated the principles of change process management and constant communication so that everyone in the firm received updates as the VDI rollout was taking place.

Explains Anne, "IT needed to engage people in a way that would make them recognize the importance of this rollout because it would affect everybody in the firm. So we looked at the unique selling points of the VDI system and created video messaging related to those themes. We branded it the 'NextJen' system and created four low-budget videos timed with our communication efforts and the rollout. We taped our own people as actors in the videos. We had scripts and a production crew, and we filmed these videos in a high-quality manner. This created a buzz about NextJen and people started using catch phrases from the videos - it definitely created an element of fun! We also maintained traditional communication, so we promoted it on the Internet, created a NextJen logo, and even had a separate page on our website for the program."



The "NextJen" Logo

The firm also hosted "Jennius Bars" where IT staff in NextJen T-shirts went to the kitchen areas of every floor in every office. They served as "hands-on" demonstrators, answered questions, and responded to any issues with the new VDI system.

To communicate the change externally and show clients the investment that Jenner and Block was making to improve service, Anne and her team pushed out press releases to promote NextJen and submitted the project for various awards. The NextJen success story was featured in the [Bloomberg BNA Big Law Business](#) and [The Chicago Lawyer](#). The project also won the Legal Marketing Association's Regional and International "Your Honor" Awards, and the AITP's "Most Effective IT Team for Mid-sized Firms" award.

Says Anne, "We were promoting people beyond our revenue producers, showing innovation as a team and as a firm. We've already won three awards and we're in the second round for a fourth award. We just can't stop ourselves!"

The Road Ahead for Jenner and Block

By the end of 2016, the VDI team plans to virtualize the last handful of users in Jenner and Block's new London office.

After that, the team is planning a "NextJen 2.0" project to deploy Windows 7 64-bit and Office 2013 64-bit, as well as other 64-bit apps. The marketing team has already started planning a video campaign to promote NextJen 2.0.

"NextJen 3.0" is also in the works to carry out an eventual [Windows 10 migration](#).

Concludes Amol, "We are very pleased with the results of this project. It has been a success for our end users and for IT, providing an ROI from the standpoint of improved client service and reduced operational costs. Pure Storage and Unidesk in particular have been great partners in this project. We're a good proof point that if you make the investment to plan, execute, and promote VDI, you can have great results."

DEPLOYMENT DETAILS

Application Management

Unidesk

Server

Cisco

Storage

Pure Storage

End User Computing

VMware Horizon

Users

1400

Application Layers

150+

More Info

Microsoft Office Suite, Google Chrome, Foxit Reader, FireFox, Goverlan, Java, Printers, iScrub, BigHand, eDocs document management, finance specific apps like LMS and Cognos for budgeting, marketing specific apps like Adobe Creative Cloud, and third party plugins for Word and Outlook.
15+ custom apps maintained by the firm's developer group.