



Texas A&M AgriLife Speeds PC Deployment Using SmartDeploy®

Texas A&M AgriLife used SmartDeploy to turn a Texas-sized PC imaging headache into a pint-sized solution.

IT PROCUREMENT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE AS BIG AS TEXAS

IT procurement for Texas A&M AgriLife was ad hoc and slow, but its user base is large and demanding. Given that AgriLife encompasses not just departments at Texas A&M University—specifically, the Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences—but also two state government agencies with 250 branch locations across Texas, the fractured procurement process was understandable. But with each branch location buying PCs piecemeal directly from vendors, and with no standardized software installations, AgriLife's IT procurement process was unsustainable. Every remote software installation required an onsite visit, and even at Texas A&M's campus at College Station, software installation and PC provisioning took an entire day—until Texas A&M AgriLife discovered SmartDeploy.

Texas A&M AgriLife now has 85 to 90 percent of its procurement centralized, and thanks largely to SmartDeploy, AgriLife's new PC provisioning is much faster. "It used to take two to three weeks to get a new computer on a user's desk," reports Alan Kurk, CIO of Information Technology at Texas A&M AgriLife. "Now, using SmartDeploy, users at our central office who order a PC by 10 a.m. can have a fully configured computer on their desk by 3 p.m. that same day."

Better still, SmartDeploy saved about 16 percent of the overall annual enterprise IT budget for Texas A&M AgriLife, making IT both smaller and more agile.

Organization Size:

5000 employees at more than 290 locations across the state of Texas

Organization Profile:

Texas state agency tasked with agricultural education and outreach

Industry:

Higher Education

Business Needs:

Easier image management

Solution:

SmartDeploy® hardware-independent imaging software

SMARTDEPLOY: THE CORNERSTONE OF IT

What kind of savings does this acceleration in new PC deployment look like for Texas A&M AgriLife? AgriLife's IT organization provisions 150 to 230 new computers per year; since switching to SmartDeploy, the average savings has ranged from \$130,000 to \$150,000 per year in reduced labor overhead. Today, much of this savings is focused on direct research support for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

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TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE

Alan Kurk
CIO, Information Technology
Texas A&M AgriLife

A large part of this savings is due to the patented technology in SmartDeploy that isolates computer images from the drivers specific to a given computer's hardware. SmartDeploy simplifies the customization, deployment, and management of operating systems and applications across any Windows® device by using Platform Packs, which are downloadable driver packs created by SmartDeploy technicians. Each Platform Pack contains the drivers needed for a specific device make, model, and operating system version.

AgriLife's IT department now maintains a dedicated server for SmartDeploy. This server houses the virtual environment for creating computer images. By maintaining the images in a virtual environment, the IT team can easily make changes to a given image without the time and expense of imaging actual hardware. This matters because AgriLife maintains anywhere from 5 to 10 images for different user roles—all of which are hardware agnostic thanks to virtualization and SmartDeploy Platform Packs.

EASIER PC IMAGING

Because a single change to BIOS settings or a firmware upgrade could ruin an image when it is drawn directly from hardware, the IT team used to buy systems in large quantities and resist moving to new models. Now, AgriLife's IT generally only keeps about seven instances of each the five different hardware configurations on-hand, and those only sit for about four to five days before heading out the door. SmartDeploy helps ensure that Texas A&M AgriLife's users constantly have the latest hardware configurations.

While AgriLife's IT has the capacity to image up to 50 computers simultaneously, it rarely has to prepare PCs in such quantities because of the improved procurement process made possible by SmartDeploy. PC imaging and provisioning are so much faster with SmartDeploy that AgriLife's IT procurement can now use a just-in-time delivery system.

FASTER PC REPAIR

PC break-fix can be a huge time sink for any IT organization; in the past, AgriLife's IT department had to limit its troubleshooting of corrupted user computers to three hours per machine. However, because those three hours might be spread across several workdays, users could be without their computers for up to a week. The previous PC rebuild process was so lengthy and cumbersome that the IT team tried to avoid using it as long as possible, further impacting user productivity. Luckily, AgriLife's IT has found that SmartDeploy accelerates PC repairs.

With SmartDeploy, AgriLife IT can get users with corrupted PCs back up and running within hours or even minutes. AgriLife's technicians can now quickly try the most common troubleshooting fixes in a matter of minutes. If those fail, the PCs get shipped back to IT and can be reimaged in about 20 minutes using SmartDeploy.

SMOOTHER OPERATING SYSTEM UPGRADES

As AgriLife's IT upgrades new systems to the latest iterations of Windows and Microsoft® Office, SmartDeploy also has a role to play. Not only does SmartDeploy make preparing new images easy, Texas A&M AgriLife's streamlined procurement and provisioning process means that departments and offices can refresh computers faster. Turnover is fast enough that IT simply handles operating system and productivity suite upgrades as part of its normal refresh cycle.

The refresh process is even easier due to the User Data Migration feature added to SmartDeploy in 2016. This feature enables AgriLife's IT to migrate user data and settings all in one step without any additional configuration, which smooths out and speeds up PC upgrades for users across Texas A&M AgriLife.

MULTIPLE BENEFITS FROM BETTER PC IMAGING

Faster provisioning with SmartDeploy:

- Generates more than enough cost savings to cover the cost of SmartDeploy licenses and support.
- Enables centralized procurement for the Texas A&M AgriLife's IT organization, which has led to bulk discounts from vendors for branch offices across the state.
- Makes computer replacement painless and more affordable for offices, which allows for more frequent and predictable IT upgrades.
- Helps IT give users newer, faster PCs that are easier to maintain and that boost productivity.

SmartDeploy removes needless complexity with its ease of use, which helps save resources and frees up IT technicians to focus on more important tasks. Even more, the cost, time, and labor savings have had a domino effect across the departments that Texas A&M AgriLife IT supports, enabling managers to plan and budget for IT needs.



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