Enhancing Remote PC Management with Intel® Core™ vPro™ Processors

First American activates the Intel® vPro™ platform to help improve remote diagnostics, streamline PC imaging, and reduce energy costs

First American Financial Corporation is one of the largest U.S. title insurance companies. The company's 22,000 desktop and laptop computers support employees who facilitate title and escrow closing for real estate sales. To improve remote PC management, the company's desktop management group worked with Allied Digital Services to activate the Intel® vPro™ platform in HP computers equipped with Intel® Core™ i5 vPro™ processors. First American anticipates improving employee productivity by reducing the time to resolve computer problems, streamlining software provisioning, and using remote power management to drive down energy consumption.

CHALLENGES

- **Improve remote diagnostics.** Reduce costs and increase worker productivity by eliminating the need to ship problematic computers to a centralized depot or hire third-party administrators for deskside assistance.
- **Streamline image provisioning.** Accelerate enterprise PC deployments and software upgrades by simplifying the software imaging process.
- **Reduce energy consumption.** Support the company's green initiative by minimizing energy consumption for the company's large PC fleet.

SOLUTION

- **HP PCs with Intel Core i5 vPro processors.** First American is refreshing clients with HP PCs equipped with Intel Core i5 vPro processors. Administrators manage systems remotely with the Intel vPro platform and Altiris Client Management Suite*.

TECHNOLOGY RESULTS

- **Rapid problem solving.** Administrators use KVM Remote Control and additional Intel vPro platform out-of-band management capabilities to diagnose and remediate system problems remotely—reducing employee downtime and avoiding shipping and deskside visit costs.
- **Efficient provisioning.** Administrators use Preboot eXecution Environment (PXE) boot capabilities to image new and existing PCs remotely, reducing the time and cost of new deployments and software upgrades.

BUSINESS VALUE

- **Less energy, more savings.** The Intel vPro platform helps administrators power systems up for diagnostics and overnight patch deployment and power them down when not in use to help conserve energy and reduce power costs.
- **Better customer service.** The Intel vPro platform helps administrators keep employee systems up and running so employees can continue delivering excellent service to First American customers.

"With the Intel vPro platform, we can diagnose and solve complex issues, like OS failures and boot problems, all remotely. As a result, we can save the shipping costs of replacing systems, avoid expensive deskside visits, and significantly reduce the productivity loss and frustration that downtime can cause employees."

– Dale Hiser,
Manager of Desktop Management,
First American Financial Corporation

First American uses cutting-edge technology throughout the enterprise to deliver products and services that can enhance the efficiency of title and escrow processes. For employees, desktop and laptop computers are essential for everything from collaborating among key stakeholders to using the company's Web-based FASTWeb* electronic ordering and delivery system.

Managing the company's fleet of 22,000 PCs across 900 U.S. locations is no easy feat. "Over the past few years, First American has centralized desktop management," explains Dale Hiser, manager of the desktop management team. "As a result, we have come to rely very heavily on remote management solutions for asset inventory, patch management, and diagnostics."

The desktop management group decided to explore ways to augment remote management capabilities. "We didn't have a way to solve many complex software-related issues. If there was an OS problem or the system didn't boot, we had to ship the system to our repair depot or hire a third-party technician to make a deskside visit," says Hiser. "Either way it was expensive, and the employee had to find a spare or suffer hours or days of downtime."

Administrators also wanted remote power management capabilities. "We ask employees

Intel® Core™ vPro™ processors help streamline remote PC diagnostics

to leave computers on all the time to facilitate overnight patch deployment," says Hiser. "If a system is accidently turned off, we have to wait until morning to reach the system—and employee productivity could suffer during that installation. At the same time, though, leaving systems on around the clock wastes energy. We wanted to gain greater control over patching and also ultimately help the company meet its green objectives by powering down systems when they're not needed."

Activating the Intel vPro Platform

First American had been deploying HP desktops and laptops equipped with Intel Core vPro processors for several years but had not yet activated the Intel vPro platform. When it was time to order the next round of HP systems, the desktop management group decided to assess how the Intel vPro platform might help augment existing remote management solutions.

With help from solution provider Allied Digital Services, the desktop management group ran a proof of concept that evaluated multiple use cases for the Intel vPro platform. Consultants from Allied Digital, which has deep expertise in using the Intel vPro platform in conjunction with remote management software, helped set up the back-end infrastructure required for remote management and demonstrated how the Intel vPro platform integrates with Altiris Client Management Suite. "The proof of concept convinced us that the Intel vPro platform could help substantially improve a variety of remote management tasks and would be a valuable investment as we refreshed systems," says Hiser.

The First American team selected HP Compaq 8200 Elite* Small Form Factor desktop systems and HP EliteBook* 8460p notebook systems for the latest refresh. All computers are equipped with Intel Core i5 vPro processors and run the Microsoft Windows* 7 operating system.

Improving Remote Diagnostics and Cutting Costs

By using the unique out-of-band KVM Remote Control capabilities of the Intel vPro platform along with Altiris Client Management Suite, the desktop management team can address PC problems remotely and even manage Altiris site servers equipped with Intel Core vPro processors. "With the Intel vPro platform, we can diagnose and solve complex issues, like OS failures and boot problems, all remotely," says Hiser. "As a result, we can save the shipping costs of replacing systems, avoid expensive deskside visits, and significantly reduce the productivity loss and frustration that downtime can cause employees. With the additional cost and time savings, our IT staff can focus more on improving our overall computing environment and being proactive with implementing new technology."

Reducing Power Consumption

The First American team will use remote power management capabilities to improve patching and drive down energy costs. "We can power up systems for overnight patching to ensure complete deployments without disrupting users," says Hiser. "We can also power down systems when they're not in use to dramatically reduce our energy consumption."

"IT rarely has the opportunity to quantify the cost savings we generate for the company," adds Clarence Edwards, senior systems administrator. "By remotely powering down systems at night, we can demonstrate clear cost savings that help with the company's bottom line."

Tightening Security and Streamlining Provisioning

The desktop management team continues to explore additional ways to capitalize on Intel technologies for desktop management. For example, the team currently uses Intel® Advanced Encryption
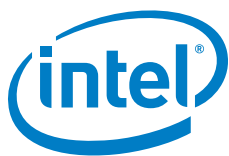
Standard New Instructions (Intel® AES-NI) technology with Microsoft BitLocker* encryption to sustain performance while encrypting laptop hard drives.

The team is also considering ways to integrate the Intel vPro platform into desktop provisioning. "We'd like to image new systems remotely to reduce time and shipping costs," says Hiser. "With the Intel vPro platform, we can use PXE boot capabilities to install our image remotely on new systems while minimizing the vendor's input. As a result, we can send systems directly from the vendor to branch offices without the time and costs of physically bringing them in-house. We also intend to use PXE boot capabilities to streamline imaging for existing systems so we can simplify software upgrades."

Helping Customers Close

The benefits of improved remote desktop management extend well beyond IT. "At First American, we try to make title insurance and closing processes as painless and efficient as possible. To do so, we need to make sure that our employees have the computing tools they need, when they need them," says Hiser. "By helping to decrease employee downtime, improve patching, streamline PC provisioning, and deliver outstanding processor performance, Intel Core vPro processors are ultimately contributing to a better experience for First American customers."

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