IBM

IBM Network Station brings grocery retailer into the network age

A grocery store is the last place you'd expect to find cutting edge information technology. But Hannaford Bros. Co., the Maine-based operator of 142 supermarkets throughout New England and the Middle Atlantic States, is about to change all that.

"Most store associates are now working on non-programmable, 'green-screen' terminals that limit their access to e-mail, the Internet and other sources of company information." Says Bill Homa, CIO at Hannaford.

But soon, everyone from departmental managers and customer service associates to in-store pharmacists will see their green-screen terminals replaced by small, sleek, black boxes that represent the ultimate in today's thin-client desktop architecture: the IBM Network Station.

Simplify, simplify

Hannaford is in the process of deploying 1,200 Network Stations for several reasons: to simplify each store's computer inventory, provide terminal users with access to a broader range of applications, and replace expensive and hard-to-maintain PCs with a lower-cost desktop alternative.

A typical Hannaford supermarket runs applications such as store settlements, inventory, sales, pharmacy, video rental, labor scheduling and direct store delivery either from terminals connected to an IBM RS/6000 or PCs running DOS, multitasking DOS or some version of Windows.

"The variety of hardware and operating systems begs for a more standard architecture," Homa says. "With the Network Station, we can access everything using just one box."

Bringing users into the fold

The Network Station will also help Hannaford give users greater access to information from the company's RS/6000-based e-mail system (soon to be replaced by Lotus Notes) and corporate intranet.

Application	Bringing server, PC and Internet applications to users
Hardware	PCs, RS/6000 and IBM Network Station Series 100
Software	IBM Network Station Manager

The IBM Network Station

While recent studies estimate that network computers can offer as much as 40% lower total cost of ownership compared to traditional desktop PCs, Hannaford expects to achieve even greater savings.

While Homa says users who have e-mail consider it their most important application, he currently sees too many corporate PCs being used for nothing more than e-mail. "That's a waste of a PC," he chides. Especially when many terminal users have little or no access to e-mail or the intranet.

"A lot of associates feel left out of the company because they can't access these sources of information and I want to bring them into the fold," he says.

"The Network Station was practically designed for us," Homa says. "It runs Netscape and Notes, provides AIX emulation through X-Windows, and supports our mainframe emulation products. That's a lot of what we are."

Cost and support: a no-brainer

Because Hannaford stores span an area from upstate New York to South Carolina, managing a hodge-podge of retail PCs can be quite a challenge. Apart from the need to have help desk personnel available 24 hours a day, technical support people often must be summoned from afar when things go awry.

In contrast, Homa says, "The Network Station is centrally managed and requires very little support. Maintaining applications is easy, too. So it is less expensive than a PC to start with, and support almost disappears."

This is what IBM means when it talks about the Network Station's low total cost of ownership. While recent studies estimate that network computers can offer as much as 40 percent lower total cost of ownership compared to traditional desktop PCs, Hannaford expects to achieve even greater savings.

"I expect somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 percent savings from the Network Station," Homa says. "I don't think the analysts factored-in things like our retail stores being so geographically dispersed."

A slew of advantages

While Hannaford initially plans to use Network Stations to replace dumb terminals, the ultimate goal is to replace nearly all retail-level PCs. One reason: the Network Station can connect to any in-store or corporate server, from PC to S/390. Secondly, it eliminates disk failures, viruses, backups, theft, and the need to devote precious in-store space to large-footprint desktop machines.

Says Homa: "The Network Station came along at just the right time. We had a need for better access to things like our intranet and Lotus Notes, and we were grappling with a number of PC support issues. I knew it was a winner."

For more information

To find out more about how network computing with the IBM Network Station and the IBM family of servers can help you make the most of your business opportunities, call 1 800 IBM–7080, priority code 6N7BK005, in North America. Outside North America, call 416 383–5152, priority code 6N7BK005. Or contact your IBM Business Partner or local IBM representative.

If you have access to the Internet you can find additional information via the World Wide Web at: http://www.ibm.com/nc.

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