

# Greenferd Construction Projects 2-Year ROI with HP Thin Client Solution



"The HP thin client technology has been fabulous for us. We're way ahead of our competition in terms of our IT capabilities and our clients are better off because all the information about the jobs we're doing for them is secure."



—Heather McKelvie,  
Controller, Greenferd Construction

## HP Customer Case Study Thin client solutions

## Industry Construction

Thin clients connected to a world-class data centre save money, increase data security and reliability and dramatically boost staff productivity

### Objective:

Improve staff communication while reducing waste in utility costs, unnecessary rent for a satellite office, and employee time spent managing and accessing data

### Approach:

Deploy HP thin client solution to create an environment in which employees can securely access corporate data from client job sites

### Business benefits:

- 15% reduction in utility costs
- Projected future cost avoidance on 1 satellite office
- Projected 100% payback in 2 years
- Controller saves 8 hours per week previously devoted to IT management
- Site managers save 2,000 hours per year with secure access to real-time data

### IT improvements:

- Improved data security
- Backups and server redundancy increase reliability to 99.99% uptime
- Software patches, updates and endpoint protection tasks handled by data-centre professionals rather than corporate controller and part-time IT consultant

### About Greenferd Construction

Greenferd Construction Inc. is a construction management firm that specializes in commercial interior projects in the greater Toronto, Ontario area. A year ago, Greenferd was struggling with an IT setup that hindered the productivity of the company's 22 employees. Today, a thin-client solution from HP and partner ThinDesk Inc. has remodeled the company's competitiveness.

### Fast growth despite IT challenges

Amid the construction boom earlier this decade, Toronto-based Greenferd Construction Inc. grew rapidly in terms of revenue, headcount and the complexity of its IT requirements. Greenferd provides construction management services for commercial clients. Its staff of 22 includes five project managers, who work out of a central office, and nine site managers, who spend their days at job sites. By 2008, information sharing had become challenging.

To improve site managers' communication with project managers and others, Greenferd purchased BlackBerry smartphones. This enabled them to view e-mail in the field but it did not provide all the functionality they needed. To distribute drawings, for example, they still had to travel to a satellite office, access e-mail attachments, then print the files. The company considered giving each site manager a standard laptop but decided not to risk network security breaches or the possibility of losing crucial data if a machine disappeared or was damaged on a construction site.

*"I'm very happy to be working with ThinDesk. They always have their clients' best interests at the fore."*  
—Heather McKelvie, Controller,  
Greenferd Construction

The situation was frustrating, especially for Greenferd Controller Heather McKelvie, who also served as the company's IT administrator and help desk manager. She spent eight hours a week on IT-related tasks, even as the company struggled to meet site managers' information needs. "It got to the point where we had so many users, it was difficult to disseminate information at the right time to meet their requirements," she says.

# Solution at a glance

## Hardware:

- HP t5730 Thin Client computers
- HP 6720t Mobile Thin Client computers
- HP OfficeJet H470 Mobile Printers
- HP ProLiant DL585 Quad Core 4 CPU hosts in N+1 configuration servers

## Software:

- Microsoft Office 2003
- QuickBooks Pro

## Operating System:

- Microsoft Windows XP Embedded at the desktop
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 R2 Enterprise

## Network Protocol:

- TCP/IP, RDP

## HP Partner:

- ThinDesk Inc. ([www.thindesk.com](http://www.thindesk.com))

## Laying a foundation for efficiency

Through a chance meeting with Dave Welch, CIO and founder of HP reseller ThinDesk, McKelvie learned about an alternative she hadn't previously considered: thin clients. ThinDesk walked Greenferd through a needs-assessment process. The result was a recommendation that Greenferd move its data and applications to HP ProLiant DL585 servers housed in a data centre run by Canadian telecommunications company TELUS. In-office employees would access the data via HP t5730 Thin Client computers, and site managers would use HP 6720t Mobile Thin Client laptops equipped with AirCard and wireless printers. The thin clients would simply display information hosted on the servers.

"This solution made a lot of sense because we're providing infrastructure that's scalable and very secure, and it drives cost savings into the business," says Scott Martin, director of sales for ThinDesk. Greenferd agreed, and its office staff and project managers went live with the HP solution in October 2008. The company expects to roll out Mobile Thin Client machines to its site managers in the near future.

## Getting out of the IT business

The benefits of the thin client approach became clear as soon as Greenferd made the transition. For McKelvie, the move freed up about a day per week for activities that contribute more value to the company. "I was looking to get out of the IT business completely. The less I know about computers, the happier I am," she says. Now ThinDesk answers Greenferd employees' help desk calls, and TELUS fully manages the company's servers, handling software patches and updates, as well as keeping virus protection, antispyware and anti-malware software up to date.

## Saving 2,000 hours a year

Once Greenferd's site managers begin using HP Mobile Thin Client laptops, they will be able to directly access the files they need while on-site at client locations. In-office employees will no longer have to e-mail documents to them and site managers will save the hour a day they currently spend traveling to and from Greenferd's offices. They will become more effective, as well.

"Documents forwarded to us electronically usually are needed on site pretty expediently," says Don Brown, Greenferd's partner in charge of production. "Site managers may spend an hour at an office printing documents, and by the time they get back to the site, there's another revision. Removing the time delay in having current information is going to be a tremendous asset for us."

## Projected payback in 2 years

When site managers are fully functional with their Mobile Thin Client machines, the company may be able to close an office that is serving the sole purpose of supporting the downloading and printing of e-mail attachments. Added to the savings of forgoing this office's rent is the 15 percent that the company is already saving on its utility bills by no longer running servers and desktops in-house.

Greenferd's contract with ThinDesk guarantees its per-user cost for three years—which, in the current economy, is an important benefit. "I have no hardware assets to depreciate," McKelvie says. "What I have is essentially a utility bill once a month. It simplifies bookkeeping, and it's comforting to know that our computing costs are fixed. We project that we'll achieve a return on our investment within two years."

## Carving out a competitive advantage

Prior to the HP solution, Greenferd suffered painful consequences when systems became infected with viruses or data backups failed. In one case, a virus shut down the entire network for two days. "That had a huge impact on us," McKelvie says. Now, with TELUS managing its servers, Greenferd is confident that business interruptions are a thing of the past. Data is backed up daily and is replicated both within the Toronto facility and to a data centre in Calgary. Says ThinDesk's Martin: "We had a blackout in 2003, and not one customer in the TELUS data centre experienced any impact."

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*"The HP thin clients connected to HP servers in the TELUS data centre make it possible for a company with 22 employees to have enterprise-class business continuity and disaster recovery."*

—Scott Martin, Director of Sales, ThinDesk

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Now clients can rely on Greenferd staff to have the information they need when they need it, even as data stays secure. "One of our competitors brags to prospects that their site managers have laptops on site," says McKelvie. "We respond, 'So all your information is on laptops? If somebody steals one or drops it down an elevator shaft, it's gone.' In contrast, if a mobile thin client disappears or breaks, we haven't lost much because there's no data on these machines."

Ultimately, the HP Thin Client solution enables Greenferd to focus on what it does best. "Everyone needs IT systems," says Martin. "But HP thin client solutions enable our customers to focus their attention on their competitive differentiators, not on the supporting technology."

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