



Avis Australia

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Customer:

- Avis Australia
- 400 Wyse thin clients
- 150 airports and branches across Australia

Challenge:

- Upgrading the Ethernet/IP environment while maintaining the requirements of the current reservation system
- Keeping support costs to a minimum
- Eliminate the need for staff retraining

Applications:

- Wizard - custom IMS application
- Emulation - IBM 3270

Server:

- IBM Mainframe

Network:

- Private IP

Solution:

- Wyse 3150SE thin clients

Results:

- Improved aesthetics
- Increased desk space
- Almost no staff training necessary
- Simple rollout and configuration

Avis entered the Australian market in 1955 and is now the largest car rental company in the country. With a market share of over 33% across the nation’s airports, Avis Australia has 1000 staff in 240 metropolitan, regional and remote locations.

Avis prides itself on both service and technological leadership. In addition to their Wizard system, Avis also strives to develop new initiatives having been first to introduce facilities such as ‘Avis Preferred’ counter bypass, and ‘Rapid Return’ at their car return centres.

The Magic of Wizard

Avis Rental Service Agents in airports and branch outlets use “Wizard”, a global reservation application, to perform a range of functions at the counter, including checking customers in and out, producing customer documents and operational reports. Wizard is also responsible for the management of the Avis fleet of vehicles.

Wizard runs on an IBM compatible mainframe, servicing tens of thousands of agents and partners worldwide with real-time data.

A New Challenge

In 2004, Avis Australia recognised they had a problem. It was facing ever increasing communication and support costs and was running two overlapping networks. The main reservation system was reliant on IBM’s SNA and DDS networks, while the newer applications required an IP network.

The objective was to identify a solution which offered the functionality of the IBM SNA terminals, but ran in the contemporary Ethernet / IP environment.

According to Nick Duddy, Technical Services Manager for Avis Australia, “We weren’t keen on a major development effort to support new terminals. We were happy to change but our timeframes didn’t allow for prolonged testing so we needed a low risk solution. Finding a new terminal that just dropped into the existing environment would be ideal.”

Why not migrate to a PC?

Before exploring the available options, it was assumed that to migrate from SNA to IP meant Avis would have to deploy Windows PCs, or at the very least, a client connecting to a Windows Terminal Server.

“With no new back-end equipment and the configuration of Wyse terminals being a couple of mouse clicks and one reboot, we both designed and deployed the solution using in-house staff, which is great; it’s quick, dynamic and cost effective.”

Nick Duddy - Technical Services Manager - Avis Australia

However, when the Wyse terminals were evaluated it was apparent that running a full copy of XP or even Terminal Services just to run an emulator to connect to a Mainframe was not just overkill, it was also unnecessarily complex.

Duddy considered that real thin client technology would be ideal. “They can be booted in seconds and with no data stored locally, security is enhanced. Because the file system is read-only to a normal user, no unintended changes can be made, reducing support calls. On top of that, the lack of moving parts in the Wyse 3150SE translates to absolutely silent operation and in all likelihood a long lifespan given there is nothing to wear out.”

The selection criteria

Avis had a clear set of key criteria when considering the terminal replacements for Wizard. These were:

1. Maintain current functionality with Wizard.
2. No new complexity between the mainframe and display.
3. User retraining must be avoided.
4. Ease of deployment, support and replacement.
5. Real ROI.

The Solution: Wyse Winterm

After evaluating and piloting terminals from a number of vendors, Avis selected 3150SE terminals from Wyse Technology. Wyse, with its on-board terminal emulation software interfacing to the mainframe, its long history as market leader in thin client technology, and local commitment to support, was the perfect choice.



"The thin clients have helped us create a simpler and more flexible system. We're now using more readily available and supportable technology on our IP network."

*Nick Duddy - Technical Services
Manager - Avis Australia*

"Avis has been able to achieve its goal of reverting to a single data network, reducing any additional network or support costs"

"Our solution made use of existing tn3270 services on our backend and we were able to use the tn3270 terminal emulator that is standard on the Wyse 3150SE thin client. No extra software was needed, making it extremely easy to integrate with our environment and leverage existing knowledge and skills."

Among other benefits are increased desk space through a smaller footprint and a more contemporary look at the rental counters. "We would never put form before function, but it's nice when an update also looks better!"

The Thin Client Experience

In late 2004, Avis Australia deployed an initial 80 Winterm 3150SEs from Wyse, rising to nearly 400 by the end of 2006 which were distributed to over 150 rental stations around the country. Loaded with both legacy and high-speed I/O ports, the Wyse Winterm 3150SE provided the core for a broad range of thin client environments.

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"The lower unit cost of the thin clients compared to PCs allowed us to install a greater number of Wyse terminals during the first migration because we were working with the budget that was initially approved for the PCs. That was a nice bonus. "

"We spent some time designing the overall solution and how best to configure the terminals. When we asked Wyse for assistance their team responded immediately and were happy to help meet our specific needs, including technical staff to work with us at our premises," said Duddy.

The final solution was an extremely close operational match to the mainframe terminals that had been replaced. The terminals boot directly to a mainframe session with a login prompt familiar to users. Wizard is the only application [currently] delivered to the desktop via the 3150SEs, which was a key objective of the project. Duddy explains, "The original mainframe terminals only gave access to Wizard, and for this project we wanted to deliver an identical solution on new hardware. We were able to customise the keyboard map to our corporate standards, and the result was what we were after – to reduce the training needed. In fact, the only training involved was a two minute rundown to a supervisor at each location."

"The thin clients have helped us create a simpler and more flexible system. We're now using more readily available and supportable technology on our IP network. While it wasn't needed for Wizard, we are conscious that the thin clients also have 'remote desktop' capabilities that can be considered for more "PC-like" roles for general admin staff as and when the need arises."

"Keeping it simple was definitely the right choice."

Nick Duddy - Technical Services Manager - Avis Australia

ROI

"Using Wyse thin clients, we've managed to control spiralling network costs without the requirement of purchasing and managing hundreds of additional PCs," explained Duddy. "As we approach 3 years of use, the signs are promising."

The benefit to staff and customers

Avis' employees and customers are experiencing the benefits of thin client computing. The Winterm 3150SEs are significantly smaller than the previous terminals, which has increased available desk space. According to Duddy, the Wyse terminals have contributed to a morale and image boost for the company. "Employee reaction has been very favourable, people noticed that their big green screen had been replaced with a smart new LCD screen and there was a perception that 'hey, this thing is great!' An additional plus point is that the terminal design looks smart on the counters, creating a more modern impression of the company."

Conclusion: "Glad we didn't go PC"

"So many IT projects get blown out of control, but this one couldn't have been simpler. We've implemented thin clients from Wyse at service desks in 150 airports and branch outlets across Australia. We've developed a strong relationship with Wyse, and I can see that continuing for some time to come," Duddy said. "Keeping it simple was definitely the right choice."

Commenting on behalf of Wyse, northern region manager, Ward Nash said, "Avis has accomplished a seamless and cost effective transition from older terminal technology to the latest in thin client computing, with clear operational and investment cost savings. We congratulate them on a smooth implementation."



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