



## McArthurGlen UK Ltd

### An infrastructure that's made-to-measure

#### Viewpoint

"McArthurGlen UK Ltd is Europe's leading designer outlet developer, owner and operator. I have a 7-man team responsible for developing and supporting our IT and IS infrastructure, hardware and business applications for 220 staff based at head office in London and across 14 Outlet Centres in the UK and continental Europe."

**Andrew Jones**  
Head of IT



Founded in 1993 and attracting over 50 million visitors a year, McArthurGlen UK Ltd is Europe's leading designer outlet developer, owner and operator, with seven outlet centres in the UK and seven in continental Europe. McArthurGlen partners a wide variety of worldwide retailers to provide heavily discounted, quality products through a pioneering approach to the shopping experience. McArthurGlen has grown at a significant rate and continues to expand, with over 300,000 sq metres of retail space. With new sites being developed in Europe, it has ambitious plans to substantially increase retail space and successfully develop its infrastructure.

The adoption of Thin Computing using Wyse thin clients has enabled McArthurGlen to streamline the processes and support of its data communications. It has overcome a number of logistical difficulties in delivering consistently improved communications to all users as well as providing value-added services such as in-store e-learning for tenant staff in areas such as customer service, sales, visual merchandising and outlet retailing. Consequently, McArthurGlen can more competently serve the information needs of tenants and shareholders across the continent. In fact, thin clients have not only greatly improved the flexibility amongst all users but also succeeded in centralising the control of McArthurGlen's IT infrastructure, reducing administration time and making significant financial savings. These developments have helped maintain McArthurGlen's position at the leading edge of outlet centre management and created competitive advantage for them and their tenants.

### Taking action

As Head of IT, Andrew Jones is responsible for ensuring that McArthurGlen's IT infrastructure is fully supported to help the company achieve its short and long term objectives. He explains: "I have a 7-man team responsible for developing and supporting our IT and IS infrastructure, hardware and business applications for 220 staff based at head office in London and across 14 Outlet Centres in the UK and continental Europe." McArthurGlen strives to maintain a healthy relationship with its retail tenants by helping them to achieve better business results. "We have built close working relationships with our retailers" he says. To facilitate McArthurGlen's relationship with tenants it needed to try and find a better way of running one of its main business processes, the collation of sales data from retailers and centres Europe-wide.

This process was becoming increasingly challenging, not only for the IT and management staff, but also the retailers themselves. "On a weekly basis each tenant collates the data generated on sales in their store, taking up to three administration staff at each centre the whole day to check and double check hundreds of reports" Jones explains: "The tenants' IT infrastructure was extremely limited and heavily reliant on inadequate manual paper-based transmission of sales data."

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"The centres' admin staff also had no direct connection to the tenants' tills, which meant they had no underlying infrastructure to easily tap into. They regularly had to phone or visit tenants to amend mistakes. The process was inconvenient, slow and extremely costly."

## "The process was inconvenient, slow and extremely costly"

Jones recognised that the McArthurGlen teams and the tenants needed a system that would vastly improve and simplify the process of data collection and processing, and in so doing increase efficiency, reduce time lag on data submission and reduce costs for McArthurGlen and tenants alike. "We knew that we needed to be conscious of the cost and supportability of whatever we were rolling out" he says. "Supporting 1300 retail outlet stores in the UK and continental Europe with varying levels of competency in English and technical capability is not straightforward."

Jones knew that the new infrastructure needed to be easy to use, robust and represent good value for money. Since there was no underlying network-connection, he initially considered a range of low cost telephone devices. "The devices were cheap and easy to use, but we discounted them partly because of unfixed costs. They looked flimsy and we wanted the ability to be able to communicate with tenants whenever we needed to."

Discounting these options, Jones turned his attention to PCs and thin clients. He says: "PC's were almost immediately dismissed because we knew that they would create serious control issues, suffer frequent breakages and also be susceptible to viruses. Trying to control 1300 of them across the UK and Europe would be difficult." It was clear that thin clients were the obvious choice. "We knew that we needed to think carefully about which thin clients to adopt and that we needed a partner who could help us implement their roll out and provide support thereafter. Many of the tenants' offices are very small so we needed something to sit comfortably in a small working space that possibly also had only a single power outlet."

Jones conducted trials in early 2005. "We completed a very quick and limited trial, helped by Wyse partner Fujitsu. They guided us through the process, providing all of the resources to build the web based network and install ADSL lines. The Wyse 3650 device was selected for trial and sent to our head office." With the trial a success, Jones rolled out 700 Wyse 3650 thin clients across its 1300 outlet store units. "We based our decision on the cost, shape and the fact that it did the job. The integrated screen, small footprint and need for just one power outlet meant it would save precious space in the retail environment."

### Conclusion

"We are now able to quickly provide much more detailed and valuable information on a centre-by-centre basis. Within two or three clicks the tenants, admin staff, head office and investors are able to monitor many aspects of each centre's performance, Europe-wide. The process is much simpler now for both the administrator and the tenants and time isn't wasted. This definitely gives McArthurGlen a competitive advantage"

## Achieving Objectives

The adoption of Wyse thin clients has created significant operational improvements for McArthurGlen. "Although a little nervous about the introduction of Wyse thin clients, the management teams can't believe the system is so good" explains Jones. All users have felt the benefits, especially the on-site administration staff who have seen significant reductions in the time spent chasing tenants for data. "Within a few mouse clicks, the management team now has the ability to check tenants' progress in submitting data and provide a list of those who haven't done so. We no longer need as much dedicated admin resource at each centre to complete the data processing. We have successfully reduced the delay of sending data to head office and accelerated our ability to measure the performance of our outlet centres and the individual tenants within them."

Tenants have also experienced the benefits of using thin clients. They now have the ability to record sales information on a daily basis, dramatically simplifying the process and saving both time and money. "Tenants no longer need to spend so much time away from the shop floor" says Jones. "The process of inputting data can be completed in the retail unit, significantly reducing the time taken to collate and deliver the information to our admin teams." The thin client based infrastructure also enables McArthurGlen to deliver valuable sales performance information to retailers.

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Jones concludes: "The thin client network is extremely robust. The web-based system has proven to be hugely powerful to all users with the flexibility to log on anywhere to view and input data. The major benefits lie around the information that we can give back to our tenants and shareholders. We are now able to quickly provide much more detailed and valuable information on a centre-by-centre basis. Within two or three clicks the tenants, admin staff, head office and investors are able to monitor many aspects of each centre's performance, Europe-wide. The process is much simpler now for both the administrator and the tenants and time isn't wasted. This definitely gives McArthurGlen a competitive advantage".