



California county slashes computing costs with the IBM Network Station

As one of California's technology hotbeds, Contra Costa County has to consider the needs and expectations of its high-profile business constituents as well as the cost concerns of its 870,000 residents when making technology decisions. While that's not always easy, the County's recent installation of five IBM Network Station computers appears to have made everyone, including the county's IT department, quite happy.

"Right off the bat, we could see the Network Stations were going to save us at least 25 percent to 75 percent versus deploying PCs," says John Forberg, deputy CIO at Contra Costa County's Central Information Technology Department. "They were easy to install — it took us just an hour from shipping pallet to production — and are much easier to upgrade and maintain because their applications and data are stored on servers, not at the desktop."

Saving time and money
Managing desktops and keeping people connected are crucial issues for Contra Costa County. The government, which includes police, fire, courts, public works and other departments, has about 3,000 users spread across 75 locations, with 45 Local Area Networks (LANs) spanning 18 cities and 201 special districts. To do their work, they rely on a mix of IBM ES/9000®, AS/400® and RS/6000™ servers, along with a variety of other manufacturers' machines.

"Because the Network Stations work with a broad range of servers, they're much better than PCs at meeting the business needs of our users," Forberg says.

An even greater challenge comes from the fact that only four of the 85 people in the IT department are assigned to supporting and maintaining the County's desktop machines.

"Much of our costs revolve around managing end-user workstations on a network," Forberg says. "On average, it takes about one to two hours to upgrade a desktop PC, and that's significant when you're talking about 3,000 desktops."

Application	Desktop client with multiple server access
Hardware	IBM Network Station
Software	Terminal emulation, midrange client/server applications, PC productivity applications





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 Network Station information via the World Wide Web at <http://www.ibm.com/nc>



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*–John Forberg, deputy CIO,
Contra Costa County Central Information
Technology Department*

With the Network Station, however, an administrator can install new software on the server and make it available to all the desktops that need it. According to Forberg, “That efficiency will become increasingly important as our people develop more diverse needs for things like research or exchanging information on the Internet or an intranet, as well as using e-mail, Java, Windows and traditional text-based programs.”

Flexibility with control
While the Network Station provides the flexible look-and-feel of a PC desktop, it also adds safety by limiting how much reconfiguration anyone other than a system administrator can do. Regardless of

what changes a user makes, the administrator can always reestablish any Network Station desktop to its default settings. And because the Network Station has no disk drive, there are fewer worries about users introducing unauthorized software or viruses to the system. The benefit, says Forberg, is that “users won’t be calling the help desk as often about deleted files or for accidental changes to their system that cause it to crash.”

Early users of the IBM Network Station in Contra Costa County are using them to access word processing and spreadsheet programs from an IBM PC Server running Microsoft® Windows NT® 3.5, as well as applications and data residing on Novell PC servers. They also are accessing main-frame systems and midrange client/server solutions such as PeopleSoft. In the future, Forberg expects to have hundreds more Network Stations deployed in County offices, booting directly from an AS/400.

Another reason why IBM Network Stations are gaining favor around Contra Costa County’s corridors has to do with the unit’s small size. Says Forberg: “Workers who never had reason to use all the features of a large, expensive PC are excited to be getting back all their desk space.”

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