

eG Enterprise at SkyLink Data Centers

Thriving MSP Relies on Automated Citrix Performance Management
For Maximum Datacenter ROI and Solid Business Growth



Citrix Application and Desktop Virtualization Services for SMB and Enterprise Organizations



Skylink Data Centers is a full-service co-location, hosting and Managed Service Provider (MSP)

–the largest in southwest Florida – serving over 40,000 users. Skylink’s business has experienced remarkable growth over the past seven years through a focus on both technical excellence and world-class client service that drives word-of-mouth referrals, its primary source of new business. With satisfied clients as the number one growth driver, excellent performance in virtualized application and desktop delivery is the top day-to-day priority, and SkyLink depends on a fully proactive strategy for performance management and customer communication to achieve these results. It is a philosophy that has served the company well, enabling growth of the client base to hundreds of virtualization-driven organizations – from small businesses though large enterprise deployments. Combined with HIPAA and PCI compliance, Skylink’s considerable range of services attracts clients that span across some of the most demanding industries, including healthcare, retail, hospitality, government and more.

The Challenge: Effectively Scaling the Delivery of Citrix Services to a Growing, Diverse Client Base

Jacob Ackerman, Skylink’s Chief Technical Officer, is a busy man. With oversight of the SkyLink data center and as chief architect for all VMware vSphere and Citrix XenApp deployments, he wears many hats to keep the business growing and his customers happy. And he is particular about how he and his team spend time, because efficient, scalable operational processes is critical to the delivery of Citrix services to a diverse client base and ongoing business success. When Skylink (then Horizon Business Services) began providing managed services, they had not adopted a performance management solution and the results were not optimal. Jacob described it as a “very reactive, break-fix” environment.

When a performance issue would come up, the first task would be to determine whether the problem was within Skylink’s infrastructure – a stopped service or application crash – or on the client’s side, or a slowdown originating in their network or internet connection. At that time, simply verifying where the problem originated was a multi-person job, consisting of the time-consuming, manual examination of log files. “Before eG Enterprise, we had to operate under the assumption that the problem was with us,” Jacob explained. “This would happen every single time someone called with a problem. Let’s face it: If you tell a customer the problem isn’t you, and it turns out that the problem is you, they’re never going to believe you again.”



“Because of eG Enterprise, I’m not stuck having to put out fires all day. I can spend my time going out and getting new business or talking with customers, just seeing how they’re doing, rather than trying to fix a problem.”

– Jacob Ackerman, CTO,
SkyLink Data Centers

Key Benefits

- ✓ 25% higher server density, totaling \$170,000+ in hardware cost savings
- ✓ Saving the cost of 1 to 1.5 full-time employees
- ✓ Ability to deliver very high SLAs
- ✓ Fully proactive performance management practices and customer communication, as 99% of performance issues are already known to staff before support calls come in
- ✓ High customer satisfaction and retention
- ✓ SkyLink staff freed from performance problem diagnosis to perform more important business functions

Why eG Enterprise?

- ✓ Complete visibility into the Citrix service infrastructure and throughout all applications on each Windows server
- ✓ Automatic discovery and diagnosis of performance issues in virtualized applications with configurable alerts for truly hands-off management
- ✓ Full multi-tenant support: Metrics from geographically dispersed customer sites are collected and integrated into a single management solution
- ✓ Comprehensive pre-built setup rules enable rapid new application deployments

He decided that in order to effectively serve these customers and scale for this promising market, they needed to find a solution that would provide complete visibility into Citrix XenApp performance as well as across all applications on every Windows server. The solution needed to simplify root-cause identification and offer e-mail notification when an issue was having an impact, regardless of whether it was originating at SkyLink or at the client's location. In this way, SkyLink could manage the customer experience preemptively by addressing issues as soon as they became problematic, rather than waiting until users experienced a slowdown and reported it.

The Solution: How Unified Monitoring with eG Enterprise is Helping SkyLink Data Centers

Jacob investigated many products that offered monitoring, but found that eG Enterprise excelled in all key areas that were required by SkyLink's MSP business. Beyond deep Citrix insights, it offered comprehensive, meaningful data throughout each SkyLink server. This allowed the team to easily understand the status of all applications and processes – providing insight into all critical components of their service delivery from a “single-pane-of-glass.” This breadth of visibility outside of the Citrix XenApp tier simply was not available in other monitoring tools. And with automatic issue correlation, which identifies and displays exactly how bottlenecks in one application are affecting end-user performance, it offered a complete solution for his requirements. Ultimately, eG Enterprise's automatic alerting became a keystone capability for driving SkyLink's maintenance operations, sending notifications about any performance-impacting issue that might need attention.

Our resolutions are very, very fast. If a customer calls up and says they're having performance problems, we can respond almost instantly with very good confidence that the problem is not on our side, and then begin to diagnose their local environment. It would be next to impossible for us to confirm if we were or were not having a problem without eG Enterprise.

Do people know that eG is the product we're using? Probably not. We just tell most customers that if there's a problem, chances are 99.9% of the time, we know about it before you know about it. And we already have someone going to fix it, and we may have already fixed the problem by the time you even get around to making the call. And that is true.

eG is what allows us to achieve such a high SLA for our customers.

Jacob Ackerman, CTO
SkyLink Data Centers

“One of the main benefits of eG Enterprise is, we're not tied to our desks, watching a dashboard. If there's a problem, it will tell us. We have very few people that are just sitting in our NOC, waiting around for a problem,” Jacob commented. “Instead, we rely on eG Enterprise to reign us in and say, ‘Hey, I need attention over here.’”

With eG Enterprise's automated issue diagnosis and alerting, SkyLink is able to better leverage the IT staff's time and abilities: “eG lets us take our focus off of maintaining, and lets us move our focus to gaining new business and provisioning that new business.” eG Enterprise is the foundation upon which Jacob has been able to build a 100% proactive performance management and customer communications strategy: “We've found that when we're proactively calling customers with internet trouble, for example, they believe us because we're solving problems for them. Those conversations go much better than having to apologize for not catching a problem soon enough, or worse, not hearing from the customer at all, and one day they just cancel.”

Another important way that eG Enterprise supports SkyLink's efficient growth is by enabling dramatic gains in server efficiency while maintaining confidence in a great end-user experience. Jacob explained, “We achieve a very high density per server – 60 users/desktops per server. Typically in a XenApp environment, you would over-allocate resources so you never run low. But I don't have to do that because I have history. I know when we're getting close and I can see usage trends. I can allocate additional resources as needed and then remove them later on. Without eG Enterprise, we'd have 25% less users per server, so far adding up to about \$170,000 of savings in hardware costs alone.”

This level of operation accuracy and proactive management helps SkyLink be competitive through very high service level agreements for their customers, a strong differentiating benefit for healthcare and government organizations. Jacob also noted that, due to eG's “spot-on” default Citrix XenApp monitoring profiles, launching monitoring for new deployments is very fast and simple. Going forward, he is planning to rollout eG Enterprise to manage other, non-Citrix service delivery, and has begun offering “monitoring-as-a-service” to SkyLink's client base.

Overall, Jacob is extremely pleased with eG Enterprise's contribution to SkyLink's success, equating its operational value to that of 1 or 1.5 full-time employees. But, he concluded, its real value to his business is not completely measurable: “It's all about a happy customer. When you can provide them with a good service and you're able to be consistently proactive, you can't put a value on that.”

About eG Innovations

eG Innovations is dedicated to helping businesses across the globe transform IT service delivery into a competitive advantage and a center for productivity, growth and profit through award-winning performance monitoring and management solutions. Many of the world's largest businesses and mission-critical environments trust eG Enterprise Universal Insight technology to enhance IT service performance in physical, virtual and cloud environments, increase operational efficiency, ensure IT effectiveness and deliver on the ROI promise of transformational IT investments.

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