

## Case History



# B2C Electronics? Business grows with thin clients



Paolo Mancini, Mediamarket Technology  
Development manager

**Mediamarket, owner of the brands Media World and Saturn, has chosen Praim technology to virtualise thousands of user placements over the national territory and manage them centrally.**

Over 7,500 collaborators in Italy, sales points all over the territory. In addition, two e-commerce portals, one of which is a leader at the national level in terms of access per year and turnover in the B2C electronic goods sector. This is, in short, the business card of Mediamarket S.p.A., part of the German MEDIAMARKT Saturn Holding GmbH (877 megastores in Europe, 2010 balance sheet) and owner of the brands Media World, Saturn, Media World Compra On Line and Saturn Online Shop, with which it operates in Italy. The company registered turnover of 2,514 million euro in 2010, re-establishing itself as the leading reality in the sector over the national territory. This also thanks to a geographic capillary presence: Media World boasts 89 sales points, placed, moreover, in some of the biggest shopping centres, while Saturn can be found in all the main Italian cities with sixteen sales points. Both brands have online portals: the Media World one in particular, as well as being the largest in Italy, is also legendary, being launched in 1999. Such an articulate and widely distributed reality cannot but build up – over the years – a true army of PCs, as confirmed by Paolo Mancini, Mediamarket's Technology Development manager: "Considering the sales points and the central branch, we have effectively several thousand posts. Until 2011 they were all made up of classic PCs equipped with the widest range of relative devices".

### Closing the cycle of efficiency

Such a wide park required notable effort from the organisational and economical point of view, in particular the overall management ended up more complicated and fragmented by effect of the hardware problems that each individual PC has by its very nature. In 2010, many posts reached the end of their life cycle. And so we faced the problem of replacement, which IT confronted bearing in mind some considerations: "The users were continually highlighting problems in performance," Mancini remembers, "even if most of the applications used were supplied from our centralised server farm, where we can scale down the power of the systems and therefore the best supply of the same. But it is obvious that if the endpoint suffers in terms of performance, the cycle of efficiency does not close". Furthermore, a hardware failure would have brought about a disservice for the user that could last several days, being such a vast and geographically widespread park. Replacement of the faulty component and the activity of reconfiguring the clients were a potential source of problems for the department employee in carrying out his service to the client in the best way possible. And obviously, there could not be a more business critical activity for Mediamarket.



Praim XT900-I

## Accepting the challenge of radical change

“What better occasion than the renewal of the PC park”, asks Mancini, “to rethink how to supply the endpoint services?” Among the hypotheses weighed up, the perspective of virtualising the desktops was the best: “A radical challenge all about change, shared and supported by our CIO, Luca Luminoso, especially for such a wide and diverse context such as that of the sales points of the Media World and Saturn chain”. Even before the technological aspects, we needed to find a partner who was technologically up to it, able to follow us on this path: we were asking for the maximum involvement to be able to confront together with our IT personnel and partners those difficulties we could find in such a complex project, for the virtualisation of which we chose VMWare VSphere 4 and for advertising of the VM with Citrix Xen Desktop. The project also inspired us to revise the management processes of the distributed environments”. And for the endpoints? “Based on the quality and the reliability shown in the tests, the choice fell on the Praim XT 900 with OS ThinOX thin clients”. And not only: with the need to cut costs of the helpdesks on the PC park, “it was essential for us to find a centralised management solution of the devices which would help us to reduce to a minimum the action times in the event of problems”. And in effect, the complete management and centralised assistance of the thin clients are possible with the Praim ThinMan Enterprise Edition console.



## The project: the test phase...

In September 2010, Mediamarket started with a first phase of proof of concept. The IT department reconstructed a real life work environment in the laboratory, a simulation with all the types of user posts, both sales and back office. All applications and devices used in the shops were tested, over thirty of them. The main problems presented in the software and devices of commercial partners: “But they were all confronted and resolved”, Mancini comments, “thanks to the collaboration of the vendors involved, among which Praim, the main contractor Mauden and Personal Data, both in the POC and feasibility study phases, as well as in the implementation and realisation, naturally, with the internal skills of the IT department, as ever with the technical coordination of the technological design division. The aim was to give the user a more efficient workstation maintaining user experience as much as possible. Our aim was fully reached.”



## Among the benefits, centralised management

The switchover to virtual brought with it some considerable benefits. Introducing improved management of the posts, the IT management guaranteed itself better flexibility, a reduction in the disservices to the users caused by faults in the workstation, higher level of independence of the client's performance in the hardware component. Thin Man Enterprise Edition played a fundamental role in all of this: “The centralised management tool of the thin clients,” Mancini says, “was a great help to us in marketing such a vast park as that installed in Mediamarket. The technical confrontation with Praim brought about an evolution of the product which now, just one year after the first version was installed, was considerably enriched with functionalities and became an indispensable tool for quick and efficient management of the infrastructure distributed throughout the territory”. Another important theme for the IT department was economical savings, guaranteed by two aspects: energy savings and the possibility of replacing any faulty thin clients in a matter of minutes, allowing for a reduction in on-site maintenance costs and the relative offsite activities for more complex reconfigurations. “Even the activities of our Help Desk”, Mancini adds, “thanks to the reduced necessity to go onsite to carry out support activities, have become quicker, improving the level of service and the quality of the work. “Regarding energy, we knew that the introduction of the thin clients would have brought about a reduction in consumption, considering that absorption was inferior to traditional PCs”.



## Advantages for business

“Then there are benefits directly for business”, Mancini continues. “Virtualisation allows us to create a new post in just a few minutes. In this way, we can deal with particular needs or layout modifications of the shop quickly, with an evident advantage for nosiness activities. The higher power made available for the VMs through resource sharing, allows us to supply more high performance posts leading to customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, with this technology, we free the user from the restraints of the physical post: he can find his desktop and the configurations of his applications from any post in the store. Choosing Praim was positive, for the product and for the support capacity. In occasion of some general problems, we were able to appreciate the speed and accuracy of the answers, as well as the availability to put the laboratories directly in the game. Praim Italia has always shown the highest skill and support capacity in such an articulated project”. The success of the project will lead Mediamarket to evaluate further developments: “With the introduction of the wireless thin client”, Mancini concludes, “we continue to decrease, in the near future, wiring costs and the costs coming from adopting new layouts of the sales areas”.

<b>The company</b>	<i>Mediamarket S.p.A., owner of the brands Media World, Saturn, Media World Compra On Line and Saturn Online Shop</i>
<b>The needs</b>	<i>In occasion of the renewal of the PC park, to improve efficiency of management and cut maintenance costs</i>
<b>The solution</b>	<i>Virtualisation of the desktops with thin clients Praim XT 900 (operative system: ThinOX). Management from a single point with the Praim ThinMan Enterprise Edition console</i>
<b>The benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Centralised and flexible management of the desktops</i></li> <li>• <i>Reduction of costs for less energy consumption and less on-site interventions</i></li> <li>• <i>Independence of the service to the clients from the hardware component</i></li> <li>• <i>Quicker Help Desk activity with a reduction in disservices to the user</i></li> <li>• <i>Personalisation of the posts</i></li> <li>• <i>Higher level of service</i></li> <li>• <i>Higher quality of work</i></li> </ul>