

McKellar & Company

Speeding Up and Improving Accuracy of Remote Data Entry with Symantec pcAnywhere

Resident property managers use pcAnywhere™ 12.0 to maintain records on more than 1,000 apartment units, entering rent payments, maintenance expenses, and other financial information directly into the central database. This eliminates re-keying errors and keeps McKellar's records current. The company's president can also access the database using a Pocket PC when he's out of the office.

Challenge

Resident managers need to report income and expenses for their properties. The amount of information that must be tracked can be large—one complex in Phoenix, Arizona, has 384 units, each of which must be tracked individually.

In the past, resident managers sent information about their properties to the central office in paper form, where clerks entered the data manually, a time-consuming and error-prone process. As a result, the database content was sometimes inaccurate and always outdated by several days. McKellar sought to improve the efficiency and accuracy of entering information as well as make the information more current.

On the security side, the company has the same challenge as every small business today: to take advantage of the Internet to streamline processes while protecting itself from the electronic threats that could potentially cripple its business. McKellar is not large enough to have a dedicated IT professional, so the management burdens of any infrastructure software had to be low, and the training requirements minimal.

Solution

To provide the remote control capabilities needed to solve the data entry problem, McKellar first deployed Symantec pcAnywhere™ in the late 1980s. The company has faithfully followed the product's upgrade path over the years. Its IT infrastructure consists of a Dell server running Windows Server 2003 and four personal computers running Windows XP, one of which is dedicated to pcAnywhere.

In October 2006, McKellar upgraded to pcAnywhere 12.0 to take advantage of the new remote access capabilities. The upgrade went smoothly and required no outside assistance. Donald M. McKellar, III, president, broker and CTO of McKellar & Company, uses his Pocket PC, which runs the Windows Mobile 5 operating system, to access the central database when he's out of the office.

“Right now we have a single person managing the posting and bill paying. Without pcAnywhere, I'd need an additional person just to enter data. It has cut in half my staffing requirements for managing the property database.”

Donald M. McKellar, III

President, Broker and CTO
McKellar & Company

Organization Profile

McKellar & Company is a property management and real estate brokerage firm based in Phoenix, Arizona. Specializing in multifamily housing and office complexes in Arizona and New Mexico, McKellar & Company manages more than 1,000 units. McKellar & Company has been in business since 1975 and has a total of six office employees in addition to onsite resident managers at the different properties.

Industry

Business Services

Solution

System Management,
Information Security

By enabling resident managers to enter information remotely, Symantec pcAnywhere has reduced by 50% the staff time needed to manage the property database.

“The remote control feature gives us a highly efficient way to train our resident managers without incurring travel costs. It has been extremely helpful to our business.”

Donald M. McKellar, III
President, Broker and CTO
McKellar & Company

The company also relies on Symantec for information security and system management, using both Norton Internet Security™ 2006 and Norton SystemWorks™ 2007.

Results

Thanks to Symantec pcAnywhere, re-keying errors have been eliminated: The data is entered by the resident managers directly into the system. Enabling remote data entry by the resident managers saves a great deal of time at the central office, allowing a single person to manage the property information data. Without pcAnywhere, McKellar & Company would need an additional staffer just for data entry.

Donald McKellar records the pcAnywhere sessions of his resident managers and reviews them regularly. This allows him to identify any inefficiencies in the way the managers are entering information, and also helps him ensure that they are not accessing unauthorized information, for example, the payment records of properties other than the ones where they work.

Training costs have been slashed, too, thanks to the remote control feature of pcAnywhere. Sometimes a resident manager has to make an entry with which he or she is unfamiliar, for example, a move-in or payment prorating. In such cases, the supervisor in the central office staff can be online at the same time as the resident manager and watch the same screen. The supervisor moves and clicks the mouse and types entries, while the resident manager observes the action on the screen and sees the results, in real time. The remote control feature gives the company an effective way to train resident managers without incurring travel costs.

The Norton solutions have proved to be reliable and effective, taking little management time while delivering a secure and smoothly running environment. ■

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Key Challenges

- Reduce time that resident managers spend entering data
- Minimize data entry errors in home office
- Provide remote access to database using PDA
- Streamline training for resident managers in the field

Solution

- Remote control and training, and Internet security

Symantec Products

- Symantec pcAnywhere™ 12.0
- Norton Internet Security™ 2006
- Norton SystemWorks™ 2007

Technology Environment

- Applications: RPMW (Real Property Management) by Real Easy Books, Inc.
- Microsoft Office
- Servers: Dell OptiPlex 160L running Windows Server 2003
- Workstations: Dell Inspiron laptops and Dimension desktops

Business Results

- Reduce by 50% the staff time needed to manage property database
- Eliminated data entry errors caused by re-keying information
- Quickly identify unauthorized access to information using session recording tools
- Protected PCs against Internet-borne threats