City of Westminster Remote Access Solution for Mobile – Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose for this executive overview is to provide a high level view of the evaluation and selection of the primary remote access solution to support the City of Westminster's Mobile Strategic Plan implementation.

Remote Access for Mobile

An important, over-arching principle behind the City of Westminster's Mobile Strategic Plan is sustainability. A key factor for sustainability is leveraging existing technologies and applications. Therefore considerable focus has been placed on redesigning existing internal applications to be device-responsive where possible and providing remote access to those applications for employees – whether they are using a desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

Westminster has several technologies in place for providing remote access to various systems. Early in the implementation of the Mobile Strategic Plan, those solutions were reviewed and tested with a focus on providing remote access to internal web applications on various devices. Several critical gaps were identified that significantly affected the user experience and had a high potential to increase technical support issues for remote users on mobile devices.

Remote Access Challenges for Mobile Solutions

> **Client-less:** Having users download and install a client software to gain remote access to network resources increases support and maintenance. We needed a solution that was client-less and platform/OS agnostic.
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> **Windows/Active Directory Authentication**: The vast majority of internal network resources (applications, websites, desktops, file share, etc.) require the user's Active Directory credentials. The existing remote access solutions either did not participate with AD for authentication or did not make the user's credentials available to resources that requested them for authentication. Users were being prompted each time they needed to access an authenticated resource during a remote session. This was not a reasonably sustainable approach.
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> **Device-responsive UI:** The user interface for remote access needs to be usable for all devices from desktops to smartphones. The solution also needs to allow device-centric interaction such as touch. Most of the remote access solutions in place did not support touch interactions on small devices.
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> **Group/User-based UI customization:** We need the ability to present a dashboard of remote access options that is user and/or group specific. Presenting all possible resources to all users is both unwieldy to the user and represents a significant security risk.

A client-less, web-based SSL VPN solution was found that potentially met all of these criteria. A trial version of the vendor's production was installed and a cross-functional team, consisting of network, systems and software engineers, was put together to evaluate and test the solution. Through testing and working with the vendor's technical support team, the solution was found to meet nearly every criteria the IT team determined should be met. The solution was purchased and the team is currently

working through configuration, testing and other preparations needed to put the system into production – providing device-responsive remote access to key applications and resources to all employees. This platform is a major factor in the success of the City of Westminster's Mobile Strategic Plan. The team is also evaluating the potential of replacing some of the existing remote access solutions with this single solution.