



# Windows Server® 2008

## Customer Solution Case Study



**Customer:** Sterling Insurance

**Web Site:**

[www.sterlinginsurancegroup.com](http://www.sterlinginsurancegroup.com)

**Customer Size:** 350

**Country or Region:** United Kingdom

**Industry:** Financial services—Insurance industry

**Partner:** Embrionic

**Partner Web Site:** [www.embrionic.co.uk/](http://www.embrionic.co.uk/)

### Customer Profile

Established in 1994, U.K.-based Sterling Insurance Group operates across a variety of specialist markets and offers a diverse range of products and services.

### Software and Services

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
  - Windows Server 2008
- Technologies
  - Active Directory
  - Terminal Services RemoteApp

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[www.microsoft.com/casestudies](http://www.microsoft.com/casestudies)

## Insurance Group Cuts Quote Time by 90 Per Cent with Solution Running on Latest Technology

**“With Terminal Services in Windows Server 2008, users have the same access and performance on computers at home as they would in the office.”**

*Simon Hooper, Infrastructure Manager, Sterling Insurance Group*

*Sterling Insurance Group needed to change its application deployment infrastructure. The company replaced the solution, built on earlier-release Microsoft® technologies and running on Citrix Presentation Server, with an application hosted on the Windows Server® 2008. This more flexible infrastructure will help the insurance tool generate quotes in less than 5 seconds, cut business costs, and ensure the continuing growth in business volumes can be easily supported.*

### Business Needs

Sterling Insurance Group offers a range of products and services, including household, commercial, and creditor insurance. From 1994, the group has grown to become one of the most successful independent insurers in the country. It attributes this success to its focus on the needs of broker clients, business partners, and their customers. Continuous improvements to responsiveness are a major part of the organisation’s strategy to stay ahead of its competitors.

Until recently, the organisation’s employees relied on a business application that often responded badly to simple requests such as quotes—sometimes taking up to a minute to return the results. But, as Simon Hooper,

Infrastructure Manager at Sterling Insurance Group explains, this in-house-developed application had started to affect productivity as the business grew. He says: “Users experienced system slowdowns and when logging on to their applications, they were forced to sign on a number of times.” In addition, the IT team did not have centralised control over user access, and individuals had to be set up separately, which was time consuming and laborious. “Employees found it difficult to function efficiently, while the IT team spent a considerable amount of time dealing with support issues,” says Hooper.

Managers were concerned that delays in generating quotes had started to affect the professional service for which the business

was known. Hooper says: "The system took up to a minute to create a quote, and we could no longer afford that kind of delay."

Seamless, remote access to the application was required to provide users with greater workplace flexibility. But the remote network link, running on Citrix Presentation Server, was slow and cumbersome to manage.

## Solution

Its unsuccessful attempts at correcting the system's performance prompted Sterling Insurance to find a replacement and deliver the application in a more professional manner. Working with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Embrionic, the company deployed a new market-leading insurance application, which offers excellent flexibility and functionality, and improves performance. It is a full general insurance application covering all functions—from telephone quotations to fulfilment. Sterling Insurance quickly dismissed a Citrix environment as being too expensive. The new application is based on Windows® technology. Sterling Insurance decided to invest in latest release Windows Server 2008 operating system, giving users highly secure access, and administrators complete control over policy and updates with Active Directory® services.

Terminal Services in Windows Server 2008 offers users seamless access to the application running on a remote client machine. Simon Ratcliff, Senior Server Engineer, Sterling Insurance Group, says: "The new application runs from a central installation on our Intel processor-based servers. We can distribute it to users without having to deploy to each computer." Windows Server 2008 Terminal Services RemoteApp™ launches and runs as a seamless application window on the users' desktops. Remote employees can access the program with a single sign on alongside their other applications as though it's running on a local computer.

Advanced network load balancing features enhance application performance by distributing users evenly between the servers, preventing potential system slowdowns. The team will also use the Reliability and Performance Console available in Windows Server 2008 to view statistics and alerts about how machines are running.

The new technology gives the company an excellent environment to support its growth. Ratcliff says: "Running on Windows Server 2008, we can customise each application to suit our individual requirements. By April 2008, we expect to have around 120 employees using it, and deployment to the entire organisation will follow."

## Benefits

Sterling Insurance is confident it will increase users' perceptions of the technology, and offer greater support for their work. With Windows Server 2008, network slowdowns are a thing of the past. Quotation delays no longer occur because the system is carefully balanced and monitored and users can work more efficiently and flexibly as a result of faster, more reliable access both in and out of the office. In addition:

- Deploying the application on a Windows Server 2008 infrastructure has secured significant cost savings. Hooper says: "Windows Server 2008 Terminal Services licences are about £55 per person. If we were to use Citrix we would be required to purchase Terminal Services licences at £55 per person and spend an additional £50 per person for the Citrix licences."
- Due to performance enhancements, Sterling Insurance expects the application to generate quotes in less than 5 seconds—a time saving of more than 90 per cent.
- The single sign on for users and seamless access to applications helps to close the gap between the internal and external user experiences. "With Terminal Services in

Windows Server 2008, users have the same access and performance on computers at home as they would in the office.

Advanced security and control over our network gives employees greater flexibility and workplace satisfaction," says Hooper.

- Fewer user requests are expected to ensure significant productivity improvements for helpdesk employees. Ratcliff says: "The single sign on means there's no second password to be reset, and there will be few technical issues due to system slowdowns. IT administrators can focus on more strategic activities."
- Sterling Insurance can offer customers a more responsive turnaround of insurance claims and quotes. "We can eradicate embarrassing delays, boost relationships, and secure customer loyalty," says Hooper.

## Windows Server 2008

Windows Server 2008, with built-in Web and virtualisation technologies, enables you to increase the reliability and flexibility of your server infrastructure. New virtualisation tools, Web resources, and security enhancements help you save time, reduce costs, and provide a platform for a dynamic and optimised datacentre. Powerful new tools such as IIS 7.0, Server Manager, and Windows® PowerShell™, allow you to have more control over your servers and streamline Web, configuration, and management tasks. Advanced security and reliability enhancements like Network Access Protection and the Read-Only Domain Controller option for Active Directory Domain Services harden the operating system and help protect your server environment to ensure you have a solid foundation on which to build your business.

For more information, go to:  
[www.microsoft.com/windowsserver2008](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsserver2008)