Case Study

Remote Management Technology Modernizes a Digital Workplace

The FCC Group moves its Intel vPro® device management into the cloud with Intel® Endpoint Management Assistant for improved security, sustainability and performance.

Executive Summary

The FCC Group—an international leader in the sectors of environmental services, end-to-end water cycle management, infrastructure development and management, cement and associated products, and real-estate management—was seeking to modernize its digital workplace for secure, efficient remote management of its fleet of 13,000 devices. The company partnered with IT consultant Inetum to design and implement a cloud-based Intel® Endpoint Management Assistant (EMA) solution to complement its existing Intel vPro® devices. The new platform enables remote management of unattended devices in industrial settings, resulting in reduced downtime, improved sustainability, enhanced compliance and significant cost savings.

Introduction

The FCC Group, with over a century of experience, provides public services and infrastructure development in Europe, Latin America, the United States, the Middle East, and North Africa. The company's presence in more than 38 countries, in whose markets it earned 47.5% of its revenues in the last financial year, is proof of its global expansion. The company's digital workplace platform serves 15,000 information workers across more than two dozen countries in Europe, Latin America, the United States and Canada, Africa, the Middle East and Australia. As a critical factor of FCC's core business and IT operations, sustainability drove the company's decision to transition the management of its on-premise devices to a modern workplace management platform in the cloud.

Challenge: Finding a Safe, Sustainable Solution for Remote Management

Before embarking on its digital workplace modernization project in 2023, FCC historically relied on Windows devices with Intel® processors. These came with remote management capabilities—as long as the on-premise units remained connected to FCC's network infrastructure. Such a large and complex system greatly complicated the deployment and management of support services, requiring field technicians to travel to user locations and incurring costly downtime.

FCC works with unattended devices in highly industrial environments such as cement production plants and water management facilities. These units perform their function without human interaction and access to them is limited. The chosen remote management solution, Microsoft Intune Remote Help, came with a major drawback: It requires user acceptance for remote control. If an unattended device were to go offline in an industrial environment, the only remedy would be to send a technician in person to fix it. Solving this problem would improve sustainability, productivity and safety, making it a top priority.

In 2021, FCC started conversations with Microsoft to define a strategy for modernizing its digital workplace, eventually choosing IT consultant Inetum as a technology partner to undertake the project. The sheer number of locations, countries and different user profiles involved added layers of complexity.

"We had always insisted on Intel processors with vPro functionality, even if we didn't fully utilize it until this modernization," recalls FCC's Digital Workplace & Service Desk Manager Claudio Escudero. "The move to cloud-based tools highlighted the usefulness of Intel vPro, especially in scenarios that Microsoft tools couldn't fully address," he adds.

Solution: Intel vPro and Intel EMA for Remote Management

Based on its strategy discussions with Microsoft, FCC decided to enhance its Intel vPro-enabled digital workplace platform with Intel EMA—a cloud-based solution for managing devices in remote work environments. This would allow the company to remotely manage its unattended industrial devices even when they weren't connected to FCC's network infrastructure.

"I think it's essential to define a medium-to-long-term strategy, then start your transformation project in line with that strategy," C. Escudero recommends. Switching to a cloud-based solution required new remote management tools to cover all possible scenarios. "Once we saw that Intel vPro and Intel EMA were aligned with our user workstation modernization strategy and cloud platform management, adopting these technologies was much easier," he adds.

In mid-2023, FCC kicked off the project with Inetum, which included designing the solution, conducting a proof of concept and deployment. The proof of concept was ready in just six months, with a full rollout following soon after. The solution has been operational since April 2024 and is already showing significant benefits.

"Intel vPro enables remote management of [unattended] devices without the need for on-site personnel, enhancing sustainability and safety in these industrial settings," C. Escudero says. "Cloud-based management solutions offer efficiency and ease, allowing us to deploy and manage our platform more effectively."

Results: With Intel EMA, the Savings Are "Clear and Very Significant"

Not having to send technicians to manage unattended devices enables FCC to resolve problems remotely that used to take at least a day to solve. This has had a substantial economic impact, preventing work stoppages and productivity losses in factories that operate around the clock. The reduction in travel to industrial sites also has clear sustainability benefits.

According to C. Escudero, one of the most useful functionalities of FCC's modernized digital workplace is its out-of-band management capability. Many solutions on the market are software-based and in-band, meaning devices must be powered on and connected to network infrastructure via an active operating system for remote management.

With Intel EMA's hardware-based out-of-band management, FCC's IT teams can reach devices no matter their status, even if they are powered off, disconnected from the FCC network or unresponsive. "In situations where an operating system may have been corrupted and is not responding, we can still connect to the device and try to solve the problem remotely," C. Escudero explains. The FCC team also values being able to make BIOS modifications and firmware updates through the same cloud-based platform.

In terms of security, moving to a cloud solution allowed FCC to significantly improve compliance levels for their devices. Before implementing Intel EMA, the company had a compliance ratio of 75%, so only three-quarters of its devices met security requirements. With cloud-based management, compliance has jumped to 95%, enhancing security across the platform without the need for a direct network connection.

Claudio Escudero credits the success of FCC's digital workplace modernization project to Inetum's expertise with Intel vPro technology, saying the entire process from design to implementation went off without major issues. "For me, it's been essential to have a strategy, a strong technology partnership to help define that strategy and a provider to accompany us throughout the project," he says.

With its digital workplace now fully transitioned from on-premise management to cloud-based tools, FCC is seeing the benefits in efficiency, productivity and sustainability. "For us, the savings are clear and very significant," C. Escudero concludes.

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