30% improvement in productivity at Shriram Capital with Accops solution

Sendil Kumar Venkatesan, Chief Technology Officer, Shriram Capital Ltd

ABOUT

Shriram Group is an Indian conglomerate predominantly into lending and insurance businesses. Shriram Capital is the holding arm of the Shriram group of companies. Shriram Finance Limited is the group's flagship company and the country's largest retail finance.

CHALLENGES

A distributed hybrid work environment (within and outside office access) requires secured remote access. The Shriram Group provides controlled access to the data and applications to ensure data integrity and compliance with the company and regulatory body guidelines.

SOLUTIONS

Shriram Group adopts Accops HySecure (ZTNA-based Access Gateway) and Accops HyWorks (VDI) for secured remote working with intelligence reports for better productivity and complete compliance.

RESULTS

Optimal control and complete visibility of employee performance and application security

Not too long ago, the Shriram group functioned in a closed environment. All their applications, controls, and data centers run from a closed and secure environment. As a leading NBFC, core applications form the base of its operations, and none can be accessed beyond its enterprise premises.

Sendil Kumar Venkatesan - Chief Technology Officer, Shriram Capital Ltd, shared, "There were B2C mobile applications accessible to the users. But all our B2B applications sat within the office premises and were accessible to a handful of the group companies. Further, application developers access the source code only on the office premises. This was the pre-covid set-up at the company, and then there was a new requirement that was accelerated by the onset of the pandemic." For a few days, overall business was non-operational, and there was not much pressure on the IT team. But as they are in Life Insurance and General Insurance businesses, they fall under the 'essential service' category. They needed to be available to clear claims and keep the business operations running.

Before the Pandemic, the work-from-home (WFH) option was not allowed. But when the pandemic struck, operations had to be up and running, and applications had to be accessed from anywhere. And a closed organization had to metamorphose into a fully open operational model!

The organization went to leading service providers to resolve the problem at hand; they had solutions from

Sendil Kumar Venkatesan

Cloud service providers, On-Premises service providers, and many others. However, the struggle only multiplied with no respite in sight. This led the organization to deploy another product where the application did work, but the resource utilization was highly inefficient. Every time they needed to expand on the cloud, more servers had to be added. It was a preposterous waste of resources with no commensurate improvement in performance. Yet again, the organization went for another leading solution and faced discontent.

"The solution did not have a proper API to integrate with our application. When it is a work-from-home, measuring productivity and development is essential. There are multi-department interactions, and there has to be accountability from end-to-end and get a holistic picture. There was a need for generating reports which would give insights into employee productivity, process,

and department operation efficiency – primarily giving a view of the proper functioning of the business, "said Sendil Kumar.

The IT department was under tremendous pressure to find the right fit for the organization's challenge and approached Accops.

A Leap of Faith

That is when the organization came to Accops. The company did not have many expectations and took a leap of faith to see how Accops could rescue them. To their pleasant surprise, right from the initial interaction, there was a healthy working relationship. Unlike the earlier vendors -- who had been working for the group and had a prominent market presence but could not give a solution – Accops gave them a POC and asked them to play around and come up with their requirements. Playing it safe, the Shriram team went one step at a time.

Sendil Kumar orated, "We did not go with a full-fledged deployment but in phases. We tested it first at one of the group companies and began with HySecure (ZTNA Access Gateway). We secured our VPN as we still had our core on the central system sitting in the main office. The employees were given secured connections ensuring that no data would reside or be copied on any of their own devices." Accops also offered their product HyWorks for application & desktop virtualization for secure access to the corporate workspace from any device. But fueled by their past experiences with increasing server resources and raising expenses, they were uncomfortable and wanted to test with one solution first and then proceed.

"We wanted to ensure the performance and accessibility of HySecure by the team and then take the next step. Our need to get insight and reports on productivity was duly met, and it worked very well for us. We gradually worked on taking it to other departments and teams. We integrated through APA on the usage and connected to HR, and now HR can process and generate reports with meaningful insights."

"There was customization beyond the regular plug-and-play features to meet our specific needs, and the Accops support team worked towards making it a huge success," added Sendil Kumar.

Moving Post-Covid

The company has espoused a hybrid work culture and is better prepared for eventualities. With the implementation of Accops HyWorks, employees can work hassle–free and connect securely from anywhere at any time. The feasibility led the team to explore the possibility of a VDA environment and work on the optimum utilization of devices and servers. To bring down the idle time of any given device, they started providing access to servers and use as per the need. With data and all other information stored on the server, there was better availability and accessibility of both data and devices. This was possible with Accops HyWorks, which allowed the user to access all the applications through a VM based on their department and position.

"Segregations were made based on the groups using the data. The employees could seamlessly access the relevant digital resources using OTP-based Multi-Factor Authentication. With the help of DLP, IT now has complete control over the devices, and no data can be captured through screenshots or copying. The solution also enables device-wise whitelisting through Mac, which has added stringent security and allows only the approved machines to communicate with the corporate network.

Sendil Kumar shared, "Now we have around 3,000 plus machines, either desktops, laptops, or thin clients. We have distributed them segment-wise, whereby contact center employees who need access to only limited sites use thin clients. The digital team with higher resources has higher server access. Interestingly, it was always considered impossible for developers to connect through a VDA, but that just proved to be a myth, and HyWorks resolved it so that developers can also access the application. Life has been made simple and easy with coming in of Accops."

Performance Enhancement and Resource Utilization

Accops' line of products has resolved issues that the group was finding difficult to address with their earlier partners and solution providers. They have seen a prominent and significant enhancement in their performance and healthier utilization of resources. And what has been a day saver for them is the improved security hygiene, given the nature and extent of their operations. Sendil Kumar shared, "Earlier, we did not know what was on their endpoint devices. Now, I have total control over their edge or whatever devices they have, including the server, which is now modular. If there is underutilization, it can be reallocated. It is a scale-in – scale-out architecture based on the requirement."

What has genuinely changed for the Shriram group is performance, security, and resource utilization, all this being controlled from a single dashboard.

According to Sendil Kumar, "In terms of numbers, a conservative estimate is there has been a minimum 30 to 35% improvement on productivity and resource utilization. Improved business efficiency and resiliency where we are becoming more and more digital."

All Accops – the way ahead

In the future, Shriram group is evaluating using hardware from Accops to save on cost and use their end-to-end offerings, which include Devices, OS, and software solutions. Having deployed its digital solution, the organization is looking at engaging Accops services for its other group companies and has a similar phased approach for end-to-end deployment.

Sendil Kumar opined, "From a CIO perspective on technology, the biggest challenge is to control the data and security. Edge device plays a major role in the lapsing on the security part; if I keep increasing the security tools and the data processing, it will lead to performance issues. Why make your setup complex? If a service provider is offering a simplified solution without compromising on security and performance -- which is the need of the hour, why not go for it."