

Case Study

Minicom KVM and Power Management Solution Rejuvenates Area Agency on Aging

Company

Ohio's Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) administers programs for the older adult funded by the state and federal governments.

Summary

Due to budget cuts, AAA7 is challenged to do more with less. Rather than cut programs that keep seniors in their homes longer, the organization looked to improve their operations by enhancing IT efficiency and implemented a KVM IP solution from Minicom that would save money, enable remote access and provide a more efficient method to manage their distributed network.

The solution includes Minicom's [Smart 116 IP](#) KVM switch, three IP gateways ([IP Control](#)) and [AccessIT™](#) - an appliance that controls everything from devices to power equipment through one centralized Web interface. AAA7 is able to take advantage of Minicom's Unique Real needs™ approach by adding remote, BIOS level, access capabilities to any analog KVM switch thereby optimizing existing technology investments. System administrators can now gain control of the agency's network from any standard Web browser and manage it through a centralized interface. Rather than extended periods of down time and costs associated with time and travel between four branch offices, system administrators can power on and off devices and reboot servers within minutes – right from their desk. Using the KVM and management solution from Minicom, AAA7 was able to meet their goal of more cost effective and streamlined IT management.

Challenge

Manage servers and network devices in a more cost effective and efficient way

With computers, servers and power distribution units spread across four regional offices, any time a system went down, system administrators were left scrambling for someone who could troubleshoot and bring the equipment back up. When they couldn't find someone, IT staff members needed to travel to the agency's branch offices - more than an hour away. In addition to traveling costs, this also meant extended downtime or putting other projects on hold so they could respond to network issues.

AAA7 began looking for a more efficient approach that would enable remote access and alleviate the need for system administrators to leave their desk to troubleshoot.

"With budget cuts going on throughout the state we needed to find ways to cut down travel time and downtime," said Charlie Maillet, IT engineering and operations specialist for the Agency. "Our IT staff are located in our Rio Grande office so if we have a server that hard locks in one of our other offices we have to find someone available, explain the problem and what needs to be done, which could take upwards of a half hour. If we couldn't locate another staff member, we needed to drive to the location and resolve the issue. We realized we needed to manage our servers in a more efficient way."

Highlights

- The AAA7 needed a secure and reliable solution for remote access to servers and devices on their distributed network
- Minicom's KVM IP solution provides secure remote access and control of computers, servers and power devices via a standard Web browser
- KVM IP gateways enable AAA7 to optimize existing technology investments by adding KVM remote access to their analog switches
- Using AccessIT™, AAA7 system administrators gain centralized remote access and power control that enhances IT efficiency and productivity, improving their ability to serve the community's population

Minicom products

- AccessIT
- Smart 116 IP
- IP Control

Solution

Minicom IP Control KVM gateway and Smart 116 IP KVM switch and AccessIT management

Realizing an out-of-band management solution would deliver the efficiencies they were looking for, AAA7 partnered with Minicom, a leading developer of KVM switches, extenders and access management solutions. Deploying a Smart 116 IP KVM switch and 3 IP Control units and AccessIT, AAA7 has added remote IT management and gained redundant and remote access to their networking equipment.

"We purchased the KVM switch for our main office and the IP Controls to integrate into our current analog KVM switches for our other offices," said Maillet. "We also purchased 11 APC PDUs that can be controlled over the network and an AccessIT™ server to control everything from one centralized place."

The 1U Smart 116 IP gives system administrators secure, BIOS level access and control to a rack of up to 16 servers either remotely or locally. IP Control delivers the power to upgrade an analog KVM switch to gain remote over-IP access without needing to replace and reinstall an operational KVM switch. Both solutions allow rebooting downed devices remotely. AccessIT is a Web-based remote access management solution that consolidates all access protocols to all IT assets onto one interface which simplifies the daily routines of IT staff and enhances the organization's IT efficiency and productivity.

Benefits

Secure, remote, redundant and reliable access to network servers and devices

"Minicom's KVM IP solution is very appealing because I can manage my whole network from my desk," stated Maillet. "They offered the most cost effective solution with the best technology to simplify management of our network."

The biggest benefit is that system administrators no longer need to travel to branch offices. Maillet noted that prior to implementing the Minicom solution he or a colleague would travel at least once a week – at \$80 a trip – to one of the sites. Now he can bring up a downed piece of equipment without leaving his office.

"AccessIT allows me to remotely activate the APC PDUs and power cycle any device – not just servers – from a centralized place," he said. "With AccessIT I can access the network and control it from home which will allow me to work there more often. It also supports our green initiatives. The AccessIT solution provides an easily accessible list of servers along with IP addresses which simplifies management of our network. Should someone new come into the department they can spend their time learning more about how our systems work, and not where they are located."

Another benefit is increased security. Instead of providing access to equipment to staff without technical expertise, Maillet can keep the server room locked and prevent people from coming in and out and jostling the equipment.

"From the beginning Minicom has been very helpful with designing a solution that meets our needs and their technical support has been great. Overall, I am very satisfied with their service and solutions," said Maillet.

Benefits

- Consolidated out-of-band management for servers, devices and power control
- Reduces travel costs and lost working hours
- Increased server uptime
- Resolves problems remotely - almost in real-time
- Direct cost savings: \$80 travel cost per week (\$4000 per year)
- More efficient server management
- Protects existing technology investments by adding remote access to working analog switches
- Eliminates vendor lock-in

