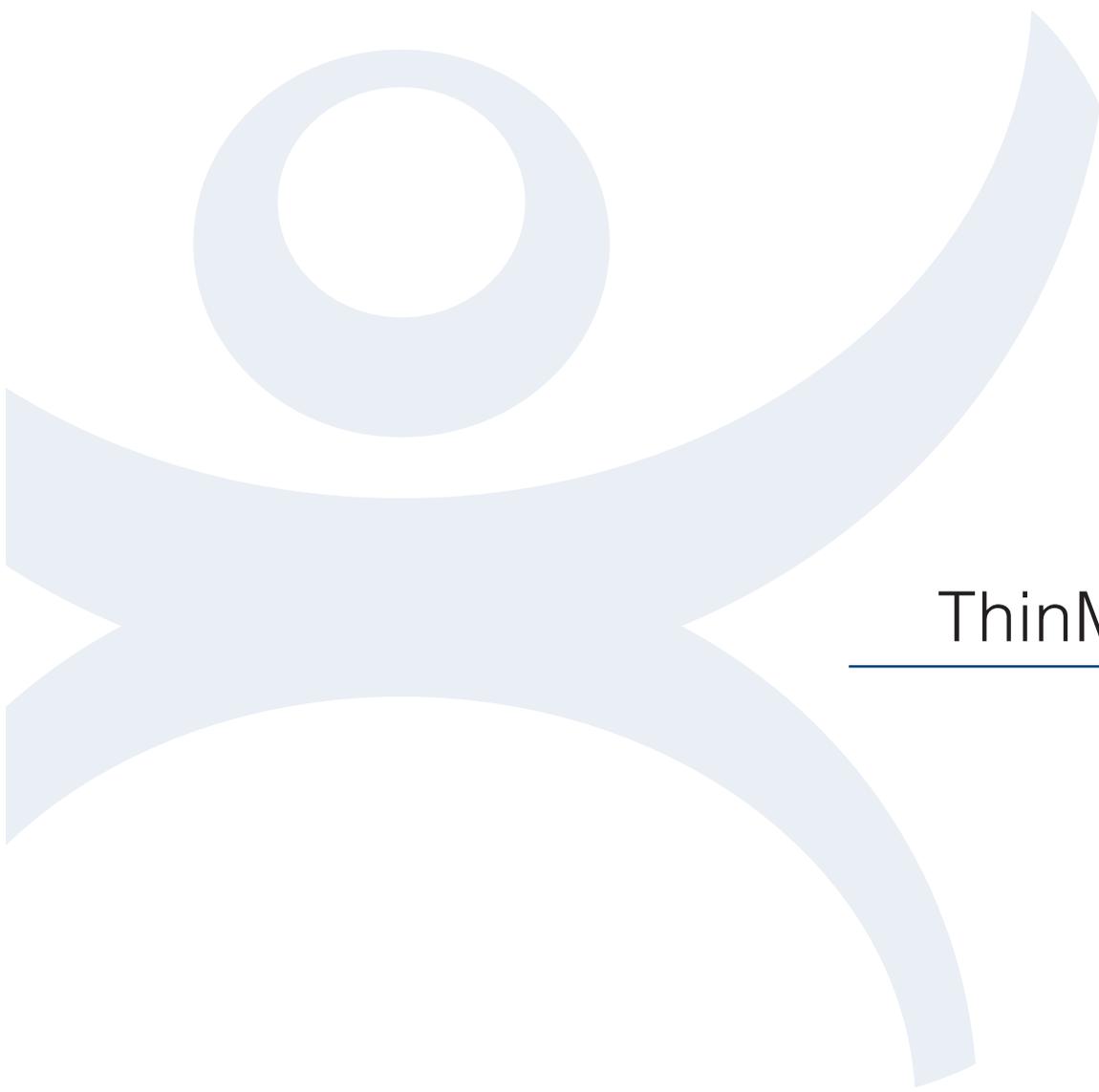




Application Story



ThinManagability

Food Processing

THINMANAGABILITY

If you've ever traveled through Baltimore you know that it is a heavily industrialized area. Out near the water you can see countless cranes and other industrial equipment moving large amounts of raw material, metals and scrap. It feels like the kind of town where a system integrator would feel right at home.

It is near this industrial area that Datability, a division of Kruse Controls, makes its home and its where we met up with Doug Coulter to discuss his experiences using our ThinManager thin client management solution.

Our first order of business was to visit one of Doug's early ThinManager project, a large FORTUNE 500 east coast food processor, who we'll refer to as ECFP (East Coast Food Processor). Several years ago the distributor for ECFP, InSource, was pushing a thin client solution for ECFP as the best way for them to replace aging PCs that were having trouble staying alive in a high heat, dusty environment. Doug was brought in so he could get familiar with this new technology since he would be supporting it once the installation was complete.

As we pulled into the parking lot of ECFP we could see that it was a very large facility easily taking up several acres of land. We were about to meet the manager of the facility who has been there for over 15 years. We'll refer to him as CS for Controls Specialist.

CS met us up front as we began putting on our smocks, hair nets and safety goggles. Safety and cleanliness are very high priorities at this kind of facility. After winding through the plant and passing several large food production lines we came to CS's office.

CS showed us the server configuration that was racked up in his office. From here he can manage all of the ThinManager-ready thin clients on the plant floor. It

was a standard ThinManager configuration setup for Failover. We all sat down as CS began to talk to us about his installation.

The project started out with just 3 thin clients that would replace the PCs on just one production line at ECFP. There had been a substantial bandwidth issue due to the Data Highway network that the Allen Bradley PLCs were running on. Each PC in the process was polling the PLCs for data. The new ThinManager configuration centralized the I/O calls, which reduced the bandwidth, and thin client hardware was now in place so PC failure was eliminated as well.

Since the original installation, ECFP has expanded every line with ThinManager. Each line is basically a three-step process—a batch mix, extrusion and baking, then seasoning. In addition, some global applications are available at each thin client like the Utilities Application, and MES Work Order Entry.

Not only is production more efficient, but when it comes to upgrades there is virtually no downtime. One of the benefits for me is not having to maintain the applications on each PC. Managing them only on the servers saves me a lot of time. CS added. ECFP is also on Comprehensive Support so they automatically receive the latest ThinManager updates which ensures they always have the latest functionality.

CS was nice enough to take us back through the plant to view a few more of the lines before we headed to lunch. We got in one last question before leaving to eat. If you had to put in a new line today would ThinManager be the solution for that expansion as well? Absolutely, he replied.

After a great lunch at a local spot where the crab cakes are the main draw, we returned CS back to ECFP plant and traveled back to Doug's office at Datability. We took this opportunity to talk to Doug about other ThinManager projects past and present.

[See the Q & A on next page >>>](#)

Q & A WITH DATABILITY'S DOUG COULTER

What is the usual reaction when presenting ThinManager-ready thin clients as a platform solution for industrial systems?

When we sit down and talk about thin clients and we can get somebody from IT in the room—they get most of the major benefits that thin clients offer. If someone doesn't get it, it is usually because it [thin client technology] is unknown to them. At a recent meeting the IT guy understood it so well that he was making my point for me.

How long have you been using thin client technology?

10 years.

How many of those projects have redundant servers?

All of them. Redundancy is actually one of the biggest selling points. The Failover is huge and the lower priced mirrored licensing makes it easier for customers to buy into the technology.

What was the learning curve for ThinManager?

We started during the early days with version 2.3. Back then it was a more stripped down thin client management tool so it wasn't difficult. For my upcoming projects I will be digging into the user's manual to get a good grasp of all the new features.

Are there any ThinManager tips and tricks you've discovered?

At ECFP we were going to need some sort of pointing device (which they did not want) to be able to access the pull down menu for MultiSession or we were going to have to rewrite the applications to permanently allow access to the other screens (the alarm banner was already occupying the upper banner in the application). By taking advantage of the ActiveX control feature we were able to simply add buttons in the HMI that allowed switching between sessions without writing new code.

Any tips for other integrators wanting to use a ThinManager thin client solution?

One thing to keep in mind when migrating or upgrading to thin clients is you want to make sure your applications are as efficient as possible. When an HMI is running on

its own box you can have an inefficient app, and you might not be aware of it. When everything gets processed centrally you really need the apps to be as optimized as possible. Also allow as much time up front to know how the customer's applications work with other applications when resources have to be shared on a terminal server.

If you could add anything, what else would you do with ThinManager at ECFP?

MultiMonitor in the control room and more thin clients out on the floor for displaying more detailed reports.

Do you have plans for future thin client projects?

Yes. There are three to four proposals out now. One approved project includes MultiMonitor for an energy plant.

What are the most useful features in ThinManager?

Failover sells the product and our customers probably use the MultiSession and Shadowing features more than anything.

What would you like to see added to ThinManager?

You mentioned DVR earlier. We have been talking about the IP camera support with a few customers and the first question that comes up is does it support pan/tilt/zoom (PTZ) and does it have DVR?

What specifically makes ThinManager useful to you?

Unlike other technologies that just make claims, ThinManager delivers on being able to view any session from anywhere.

If you were going to recommend ThinManager to other integrators what would you say to them?

ThinManager has always exceeded our customer's expectations. In the end, this is an integrator's ultimate goal. You end up with customers like ECFP who only want to use ThinManager. The thin client architecture also facilitates remote access to the installed applications via VPN, improving our ability to support our customers.

We know that once we install ThinManager, it's only a matter of time before the entire facility will be migrated to thin clients.



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