Case Study

"Avanite are actively tackling the problem" – Gwyn Williams, ICT

Background

Gwynedd Council provides public services to the 122,000 residents of the old counties of Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire, along with full IT services for North & Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (a part of the Welsh Government) and GwE (School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales). Gwynedd Council is by far the largest employer in North West Wales with nearly 4000 employees in key areas such as Education, Highways, Economic Development, Social Services and Welfare, and Planning.

The Problem

The size of user profiles can be the bane of any Citrix administrator's life and has an adverse effect on user experience, storage, and network requirements. We implemented AppSense (Ivanti) Environment Manager together with a mandatory Windows profile and were pleased to see the average size of 0.5MB per user within the AppSense database. We then implemented Internet Explorer 11 and rapidly saw the per user size grow to an average of 12MB per user. Do we assume 2MB of this is down to the new office and talk about 10MB per user? Not only was this having an adverse effect to our database size but users were reporting increased logon times with their systems. We found that removal of the web data by deleting the user's Windows Settings Group for Internet Explorer restored their login times, however users then reported loss of their browsing history and cookies. We explored possible solutions with Microsoft and AppSense but neither had anything on their respective road-maps to address our issues.
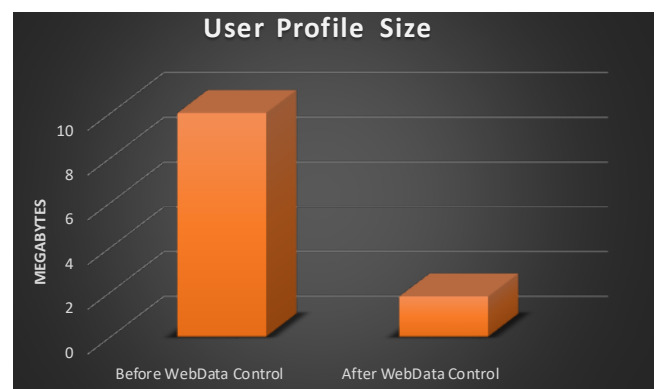
The Solution

Researching the problem I came across Avanite Limited and their WebData Control product. From the outset I was impressed with the knowledge of their staff, not only in this specific area, but with their knowledge of managing user profiles, providing me with some valuable tips for improving my AppSense implementation. The first thing to strike me was how easy the product was to implement. The software was baked into our Citrix image and all configuration is done via Active Directory Group policy. Avanite worked with me on the configuring the product and we immediately saw the benefits, even with the minimal data available to my test users. I even saw a reduction in the size of the webcache database from the default creation size with no web browsing. Again I was impressed by their knowledge and they explained to me why this was, and the all then a complete explanation of data in the webcache and it's functionality.
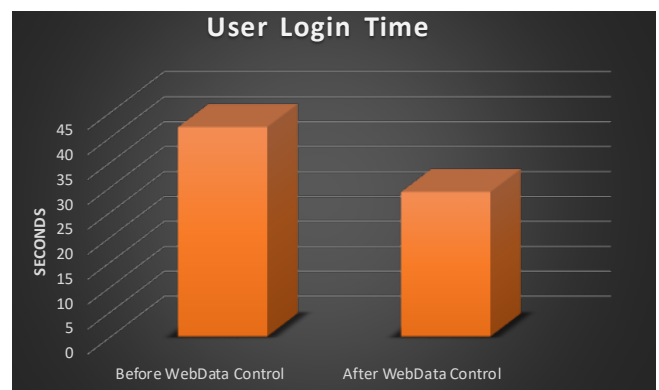
The results shown below ,together with the positive feedback from our users, was enough for us to purchase the software but hearing the other benefits made it a no-brainer for us. Although Internet Explorer is our browser of choice we know that it is being replaced by Microsoft with Edge. At some stage, we will have to explore the other browsers out there and it is good to know that WebData Control already supports all the common Windows browsers. The granular control available is also an interesting feature. We have seen great improvements with a standard configuration but will be looking on taking advantage of their whitelisting and blacklisting functions to further tune the data we keep. The security of our data is another main concern of ours with holding extremely sensitive data on the people. By actively targeting web data that can be used to transmit data to third party companies this brings with it further piece of mind over data privacy.
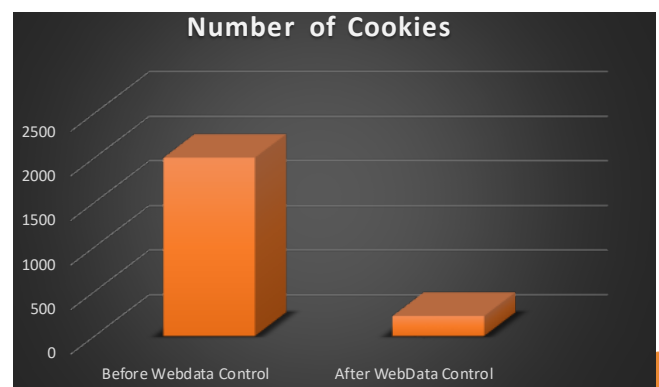
Results

We have implemented Avanite WebData Control on our Citrix systems and deployed this out to 1300 users. The results below show a before and after snapshot of the results. The key point to note is that the after results are now at a steady state whereas the the before results were steadily increasing and would only worsen over time. Also worth noting is the reduction in the number of cookies we need to keep. We already use AdBlock across our Citrix estate and were extremely surprised to see how many extra cookies can still be removed from our systems whilst retaining our browsing experience.

User Profile Size

Reduced by 82%

User Login Time

Reduced by 30%

Number of Cookies

Reduced by 89%