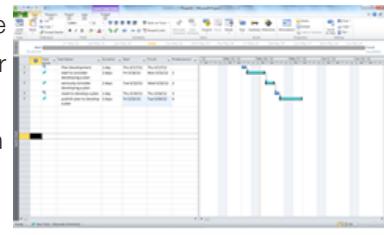


When VDI Comes Calling



Don MacVittie, 2012-21-05

It is an interesting point/counterpoint to read up about Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) deployment or lack thereof. The industry definitely seems to be split on whether VDI is the wave of the future or not, what its level of deployment is, and whether VDI is more secure than traditional desktops. There seems to be very little consensus on any of these points, and yet VDI deployments keep rolling out. Meanwhile, many IT folks are worried about all of these “issues” and more. Lots more. Like where the heck to get started even evaluating VDI needs for a given organization.



There's a lot written about who actually needs VDI, and that is a good place to start. Contrary to what some would have you believe, not every employee should be dumped into VDI. There are some employees that will garner a lot more benefit from VDI than others, all depending upon work patterns, access needs, and software tools used. There are some excellent discussions of use cases out there, I won't link to a specific one just because you'll need to find one that suits your needs clearly, but searching on VDI use cases will get you started.

Then the hard part begins. It is relatively easy to identify groups in your organization that share most of the same software and could either benefit, or at least not be harmed by virtualizing their desktop. Note that in this particular blog post I am ignoring application virtualization in favor of the more complete desktop virtualization. Just thought I'd mention that for clarity. The trick, once you've identified users that are generally the same, is to figure out what applications they actually use, what their usage patterns are (if they're maxing out the CPU of a dedicated machine, that particular user might not be a great choice for VDI unless all the other users that share a server with them are low-usage), and how access from other locations than their desktop could help them to work better/smarter/faster.

A plan to plan.

I don't usually blog about toolsets that I've never even installed, working at Network Computing Magazine made me leery of “reviews” by people who've never touched a product. But sometimes (like with Oracle DataGuard about a year ago), an idea so strikes to the heart of what enterprise IT needs to resolve a given problem than I think it's worth talking about. Sometimes – like with DataGuard – lots of readers reap the benefits, sometimes – like with Cirtas – I look like a fool. That's the risks of talking about toys you don't touch though.

That is indeed an introduction to products I haven't touched 😊. [Centrix Software's Workspace IQ](#) and Lakeside Software's [Systrack Virtual Machine Planner](#) are tools that can help you evaluate usage patterns, software actually run, and usage volumes. Software actually run is a good indicator of what the users actually need, because as everyone in IT knows, often software is installed and when it is no longer needed it is not removed. Usage patterns help you group VMs together on servers. The user that is active at night can share a VM with daytime users without any risk of oversubscription of the CPU or memory. Usage volumes also help you figure out who/how many users you can put on a server. For one group it may be very few heavy users, for another group it may be very many light users.

And that's knowledge you need to get started. It helps you scope the entire project, including licenses and servers, it helps you identify the groups that will have to be trained – and yes coddled – before, during, and shortly after the rollout is occurring, and it helps you talk with vendors about their product's capabilities. One nice bit about Systrack VMP is that it suggests the correct VDI vendor for your environment. If it does that well, it certainly is a nice feature.

These aren't new tools by any means, but as more and more enterprises look into VDI, talking about solutions like this will give hapless architects and analysts who were just thrown into VDI projects a place to start looking at how to tackle a very large project. It wouldn't hurt to read the blog over at [Moose Logic](#) either, specifically [Top Ten VDI Mistakes](#) entry.

And when you're planning for VDI, plan for the network too. There's a lot more traffic on the LAN in a VDI deployment than there was before you started, and for certain (or maybe all) users you're going to want high availability. We can help with that when the time comes, just hit [DevCentral](#) or our [website](#) and search for VDI.

Hopefully this is a help to those of you who are put onto a VDI project and expected to deliver quickly. It's not all there is out there by any stretch, but it can get you started.

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F5 Networks, Inc. | 401 Elliot Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 | 888-882-4447 | f5.com

F5 Networks, Inc.
Corporate Headquarters
info@f5.com

F5 Networks
Asia-Pacific
apacinfo@f5.com

F5 Networks Ltd.
Europe/Middle-East/Africa
emeainfo@f5.com

F5 Networks
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