



## **Five Observations Related to Client Virtualization**

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Client virtualization has never been a hotter topic. My colleagues and I have spent a lot of time focusing on this topic with all the major vendors, and this spring have attended user conferences such as [Citrix Synergy](#) and Symantec Vision, a number of observations have come to mind.

### **One size does not fit all.**

For the longest time, the industry has used the term VDI to represent all dimensions of client virtualization. In fact, there are no fewer than four distinct forms of client virtualization, including distributed virtual desktops (DVD - multiple client OSES on a client), application virtualization (application streamed or delivered on demand), centralized virtual desktops (CVD - multiple client OSES on a server), and user session virtualization (using Remote Desktop Services and XenApp).

These four technologies have been around for differing lengths of time; DVD – at least in a form consumable by the average end user – has been on market for only a year or so and is arguably still an emerging technology (that said, VMware Workstation has been around for about 8 years now); CVD and application virtualization have been on the market for 4-5 years, while user session virtualization is over 15 years old today. It would be nice to pick one of these solutions and limit your adoption to that one technology area. To be sure, you can start with one of the above to serve as an entry point, but to really be successful in meeting next-generation user demands, a multifaceted approach will be mandatory. The vendor that can integrate these technologies in a seamless manner, allowing for the appropriate connection based on location and device will eventually win in the market. No vendor is totally there yet, although we would put Citrix as having the broadest portfolio and the best integration story at this time, although not fully out of strike range of its competitors.

### **Client-Side Hypervisors Remain a Contentious Topic**

There continues to be a debate raging about whether client hypervisors make sense or not, and whether they create more issues rather than fewer issues for IT pros managing client devices. [Microsoft's March 18 announcement](#) moved the bar very significantly, from the company from a position of obstructionism to an endorsement of client virtualization. However, Microsoft stopped short of endorsing all forms of client virtualization at that time, and has chosen to lean on Citrix to address client side hypervisors. VMware has not moved forward with a Type-1 (bare metal) hypervisor, and has instead chosen to stay with Type-2 (hosted) technology for the immediate future. Citrix, on the other hand, has made a bold play with its [XenClient initiative](#) to establish a first-mover presence in the market (though there are startups that have beaten Citrix to the punch). The demos at Citrix Synergy show the technology to offer some interesting promise, despite it still being in beta form.

### **The Rift Between Microsoft and VMware is Not Going Away**

Regardless of how well current Microsoft execs know VMware CEO Paul Maritz, one thing that is clearly not changing is the bitter competition between VMware and Microsoft. Since Microsoft and Citrix have moved back to a more closely aligned partnership, that allies two of the big three players and leaves the other company as odd man out. Further, VMware's approach seems to be focused on trying to reduce the perceived value of the operating systems layer. Unfortunately, today, about 99.999% of all applications still depend on an operating system in the overall infrastructure software stack, even when virtualized.

### **The iPad is Helping Prove the Value of Client Virtualization**

What does the iPad have to do with client virtualization? Actually, a lot more than you might think. This device perfectly illustrates the need to use client virtualization to solve business problems – because it's not a PC, does not run Windows, and won't natively support the corporate applications that iPad users are going to need. At both Symantec Vision and Citrix Synergy, iPads were the hot item of discussion, and demonstrating how to support them as a new, but complete, member of the corporate client device family was a priority for Citrix at Synergy. We sincerely doubt that corporate IT is going to want to go back to a heterogeneous client environment with multiple sets of applications, so corporate IT is going to need to find a work-around, and solutions like XenApp and VMware View may be the answer.

### **Client Virtualization has Become a Mainstream Technology.**

When does a technology officially transition from an emerging technology to a mainstream technology? Defining "mainstream" can be illustrated as a pure number of installations, market share, dollars generated, or end user interest and adoption. In this case, user session virtualization has been mainstream for over a decade, and distributed desktop virtualization is barely off the starting blocks. Application virtualization and centralized virtualized desktop technology is somewhere between those two positions, but collectively, there is enough momentum and user adoption that it would be impossible to say this is not a mainstream solution. And if the interest in mobile computing and slick new form factor devices is any indication, the market has nowhere to go but up.

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