



Making the Move from Citrix to VMware Horizon Air

What You Need to Know to Get From
Desktop Deployment to User Productivity

WHITE PAPER

Introduction

It has been said that the greatest promise of information technology is that it empowers people to do what they want to do. It allows them to be creative, and to be productive. By helping people learn things they didn't think they could learn, at its essence, information technology is all about potential – the potential of people and subsequently, of the organizations to which they belong.

This simple explanation of the ethos of information technology provides us with an interesting starting point when discussing the current state of desktop virtualization.

If we accept information technology as the ultimate enabler to learning, productivity, and potential, we have a sufficient foil upon which to reflect the current landscape that supports virtual desktop computing. For the better part of the last 20 years, the industry has offered organizations looking to provide its users with virtual desktops and applications little choice, and subsequently, little that would begin to fulfill information technology's ultimate potential – until recently.



The emergence of desktops as a service (DaaS), a cost-effective, easy-to-deploy and manage virtual desktop solution, takes full advantage of today's modern, robust cloud-based infrastructure to provide the viable long-term alternative to desktop virtualization solutions from Citrix that can take an organization's productivity to the next level.

This paper will examine advantages of VMware Horizon® Air™ Desktops and Apps over the virtual desktop solution from Citrix, illustrating why VMware is not only the logical alternative, but also the superior long term choice.

Challenges

On the surface, virtualization platforms appear more similar than they are different. Regardless of vendor, these systems deliver desktop implementations along with application software in a client/server environment to users, through a flexible, secure delivery model.

Multiple Applications, Varying Interfaces

When viewed from an operational standpoint however, similarities begin to quickly evaporate. Day-to-day management of Citrix-based desktop virtualization implementations is governed through multiple applications. Citrix XenApp, which allows users to connect to corporate applications hosted on central servers, contains no fewer than five SDKs. Citrix XenDesktop delivers unique desktop instances on a per user basis, but forces system administrators to synthesize tasks between management tools and master multiple interfaces while doing so.

Many organizations running XenApp also experience significant performance related issues affecting file servers that manage user profiles, causing significant access delays and even dreaded frozen sessions.

Performance

Troubleshooting the source of performance related issues is time consuming, and expensive. Is the issue network or load related? Or is it something else? The complexity of the Citrix platform, and the severe lack of detailed documentation make troubleshooting such issues tedious, sapping productivity both at the administration and user end.

Upgrades

Any system upgrade, no matter how simple or complex, requires proper resourcing, adroit project planning, and time.

For years, legacy Citrix ran on IMA (Independent Management Architecture) – an all-inclusive term coined to describe the product's management and configuration database, along with its associated Windows services – while XenDesktop ran on FMA (Flexcast Management Architecture). For system administrators, having separate products on separate platforms defeats the purpose of a single vendor solution.

With the introduction of XenDesktop 7 in 2013, Citrix attempted to consolidate XenApp and XenDesktop into one product offering in an effort to help ease upgrade paths and avoid complete system re-architecting when upgrades were required. With a long list of XenApp features left behind, the upgrades to the latest version lagged, forcing Citrix to relent and reintroduce XenApp¹ as a standalone application.

So despite these efforts, straightforward upgrade paths remain elusive for organizations running virtual environments through Citrix, raising the question, how long can any organization continue to consume valuable resources and time as Citrix XenDesktop and XenApp continue to function as distinctly separate products, living on equally separate platforms?

Solution

Horizon Air provides a homogeneous, all-in-one solution – a solution that provides an easy to deploy and manage virtual desktop and application alternative that organizations can rely on for the long term.

Flexible Growth & CapEx Savings

With a well-earned industry reputation as an enterprise-class vendor, VMware Horizon Air delivers an enterprise-class service that allows you to grow as your organization grows, providing the flexibility necessary to accommodate modern business growth and seasonal fluctuations. For example, operations in businesses such as e-commerce and financial services see greater demand for services during peak seasonal periods, requiring additional seats to be provisioned quickly – a level of flexibility only Horizon Air provides.

Similarly, when organizations experience growth through mergers or acquisitions, Horizon Air streamlines employee onboarding, allowing IT to provision new seats quickly, integrating divergent workforces to reduce churn and increase productivity.

DaaS places virtual desktops along with their related applications and infrastructure in the cloud, enabling organizations whose peak times last only two to three months per year to expand and contract its infrastructure as needed. This allows IT to redeploy personnel and network infrastructure more quickly and efficiently than ever before while realizing significant cost savings for organizations overall.

Horizon Air vs. Citrix

	Horizon Air	Citrix
Unified Platform for VDI, RDS desktops, & RDS applications	YES	YES
Multi-tenant ability	YES	NO
Scales to multiple data centers	YES	NO
Grid based architecture (no single point of failure)	YES	NO
Platform deployed as HA by default	YES	NO
Scale model for 100s of 1000s of desktops & apps	YES	NO
Does not require MS-SQL and Win Server licenses	YES	NO
Role separation between Desktop Administrator and Service Provider	YES	NO
Does not need Active Directory Trust	YES	NO
Isolated tenant broker repositories	YES	NO
Proven mature cloud delivery platform	YES	NO
RESTful API for custom integration	YES	NO

¹ Brian Madden, [brianmadden.com](http://www.brianmadden.com) (<http://www.brianmadden.com/blogs/brianmadden/archive/2014/03/13/citrix-tried-to-stem-the-anger-by-un-killing-xenapp-but-is-7-5-a-realistic-upgrade-from-6-5-seems-like-no.aspx>)

Leveraging the cloud removes the burden of physical server storage and networking gear, deleting the cost of back-end infrastructure from capital expenditure budgets. Organizations who have optimized their physical resources with Horizon Air typically realize a 27 percent savings in capital expenditures, along with a 57 percent decrease in the amount of CPU that's utilized during AV scans.

Rated number one in the Temkin Report's Net Promoter scores of 54 vendors², VMware is a four-time winner of Virtualization Review's coveted Readers' Choice Award³. Horizon's all-in-one packaging provides the most value from any single product or vendor, saving deployment and management time and resources compared to Citrix XenDesktop, while delivering a high-quality experience to users at an unmatched price⁴.

Similarly, when organizations experience **growth** through mergers or acquisitions, Horizon Air streamlines employee onboarding by allowing IT to provision new seats quickly, integrating divergent workforces to reduce churn and **increase productivity**.

A Hybrid Solution

Horizon Air is the industry's first hybrid desktop as a service (DaaS) solution, giving customers the ability to blend public cloud desktops with on-premise Horizon 6 private cloud desktops for a seamless end-user experience. In just a few simple steps, IT departments can provision, deploy, and manage high-quality, full Windows desktops to end users, allowing them to access personal workspaces from laptops, desktops, zero or thin clients, Google Chromebooks, tablets (Apple iOS, Google Android), and mobile devices – anytime, anywhere.

Unified Management

With Horizon Air Desktops and Apps, the same IT experts who manage deployment can also manage infrastructure and applications through a unified console. When compared to the three unique consoles required to manage a Citrix-based environment, it quickly becomes clear that VMware provides a more streamlined management experience.

Integration with Microsoft Remote Desktop Services (RDS) ensures VMware's end-to-end solution not only delivers and manages full virtual desktops, but also provisions shared desktops and hosted applications to end-users across virtual data centers, virtual machines, and physical devices. Vendor-agnostic by nature, VMware supports the broadest set of application types – from packaged applications such as VMware's ThinApp to Web apps and software that's delivered as a service (SaaS).

² Temkin Group *Tech Vendor NPS Benchmark, 2013* (<http://www.temkingroup.com/research-reports/tech-vendor-nps-benchmark-2013/>)

³ *2014 Virtualization Review Readers' Choice Awards* (<http://virtualizationreview.com/articles/2013/12/01/readers-choice.aspx>)

⁴ *Principled Technologies Scale testing and cost analysis study: VMware Horizon View 5.2 virtual desktop density vs. Citrix XenDesktop 5.6* (http://www.principledtechnologies.com/VMware/View_vs_XD_0713_v2.pdf)

Conclusion

From the top of the network stack to the bottom, VMware's ownership of and commitment to manage all of the critical elements of an organization's network infrastructure positions Horizon Air Desktops and Apps as the best choice to deploy and manage virtual desktops and applications over the long term.

Legacy Citrix solutions impede an organization's ability to upgrade its infrastructure, creating unnecessary roadblocks in their quest to effectively support the demands of the modern workplace. Whether it be through inconsistent multiple interfaces or third-party network element integrations, Citrix has become synonymous with complexity.

By removing management complexity and streamlining process and network operations through a unified view of its virtual desktops and applications, Horizon Air helps organizations realize information technology's ultimate promise, allowing organizations to reach their true potential by enabling creativity, productivity, and ultimately, growth.

