Mike Nelson – SV article

vSphere Mobile Administration – The vCMA & Mobile Admin Clients

These days, everyone wants mobility options for software, whether it is an application interface, website or a portal. VMware is no different, and with last year's initial release of the vCMA (vCenter Mobile Access) virtual appliance, they finally opened the door for Administrators to do their daily work without requiring a desktop. But, I still see controversy on what direction VMware is taking for mobile administrative clients and how they are implemented and supported.

I'll first cover the vCMA Fling, since it is a required backend for some clients. If you haven't yet heard of these little gems called Flings put out by the really, really smart folks at VMware Labs, go on over to their site and take a look at all their offerings. They are all free, although mostly unsupported, but can become very valuable assets that you use in your everyday administration work. I wrote about the VMware Labs some time ago in this article.

The vCMA is a virtual appliance that comes ready to import into your ESXi environment. Follow the instruction on the vCMA Fling site to install, and you can even watch a YouTube video on its use. Once you have it all setup and configured via the URL https://<vCMA IP Address>:5480 (replace the vCMA IP Address with the address the appliance shows on the console screen) , you're ready to try your mobile device.

Open your device's browser and go to the URL of the vCMA at https://<vCMA IP Address>/vim. Enter a vCenter server name (or ESXi host name) and your authentication credentials and you're ready to go! Here's what some of the options look like.
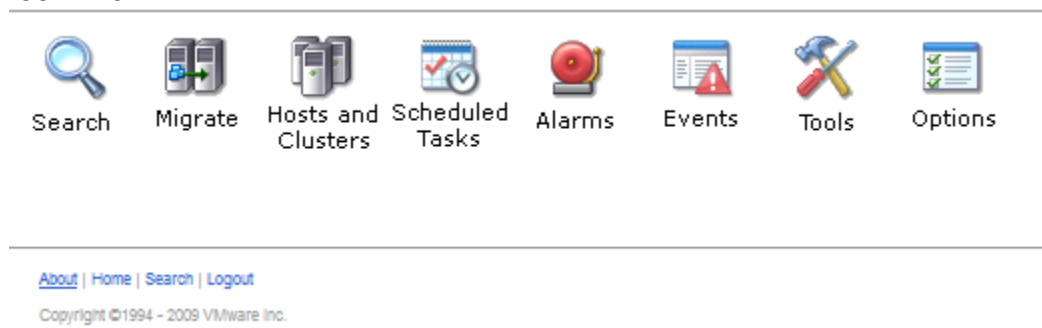

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Figure 1 - Main Menu

DRS Enabled:	**yes**
HA Enabled:	**yes**
Total CPU:	**91.15 GHz**
Total Memory:	**305.97 GB**
# of Processors:	**36**
Hosts:	3

Figure 2- Host Basic View

Manufacturer:	**HP**
Model:	**ProLiant DL380 G7**
Processor Type:	**Intel(R) Xeon(R) CPU E5649 @ 2.53GHz**
Processors:	**12 CPU x 2.53 GHz**
Memory:	**101.99 GB**
Number of NICs:	**6**
Managed by:	
VMotion Enabled:	**yes**
Virtual Machines:	2
Datastores:	5
Networks:	**vlan502** **vlan504**
Other:	**Events** **Ping** **TraceRoute**

Figure 3 - Host Detailed View

Guest OS: Microsoft Windows Server 2008 R2 (64-bit)

Power State: Powered On

Resources: 4 vCPU, 4096 MB

Usage: 303 MHz, 1105 MB

Tools Status: Up to date

IP Address:

Host:

Datastores: _lun1 (315.1 GB / 499.75GB)

Networks: vlan502

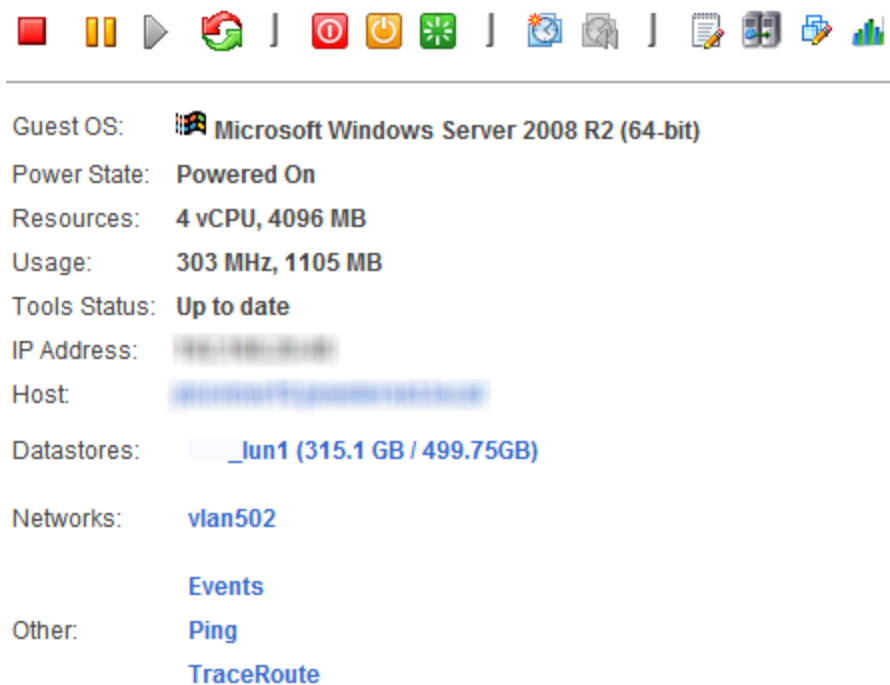Events

Other: Ping

TraceRoute

Figure 4 - Guest VM View

I have found that the interface is usable, but it does have some quirks about it. There is no breadcrumb navigation so you can get lost very easily and clicking your browsers Back button can cause it to throw errors. Also, you should have the option to show text labels for the many icons presented to you. Unless you hover over them, which are really kind of difficult on a smartphone, you might not know what they do. There is no option for opening consoles into your Guest VM's, which I find very disappointing, no matter how small the screen. Screen real estate is an issue with any mobile application that attempts to show an entire desktop, but it still should be an option in case of emergency. All in all, I think the vCMA is a good attempt to provide mobile admin access, but it does need some work.

Some will argue that this Fling is over a year old now and isn't intended to be "the" mobile access interface for vCenter, mainly since it is an unsupported Labs entry. The sticking point about this is that VMware also has a vSphere Client for iPad and iPhones. For whatever reason, they have made the vCMA a required backend for these mobile apps to work. This is somewhat confusing since it is clearly stated in the Labs that anything produced by them is not supported by VMware technical support. And, the Clients are "available as-is, with community support only". So, what you have is a client that is "community" supported on a backend that is not supported at all. Strange, but true.

I have to then ask the question to VMware about what direction they are going with all of this? When will you stand up and fully supported mobile administration? Will it be the new vSphere Web Client introduced with version 5? Well, it is definitely a step forward in progress when having conversations around eliminating the "fat"

vSphere client that has been required for so long with their products. But, it still does not provide a true mobile interface, one that can be used on tablets as well as phones.

Surprisingly enough, VMware has released a mobile client for the MyVMware administration portal, along with separate mobile clients to administer their new Horizon product, and even their virtual desktop offering View. Where is this all going? I'm of the belief that VMware is definitely headed in the wrong direction on this. I believe that VMware is creating too many different mobile access clients for their different product lines rather than concentrating on what every administrator wants – a single pane of glass. A single administrative interface for everything. Why is that such a difficult concept for software vendors to grasp, especially VMware?