

Mike Nelson – SVD article, due August 13, 2010

Hypervisor Management – Indifference is the Key

The Merriam-Webster English Dictionary defines the term Indifference as:

*In-dif-fer-ence; [in-**dif**-er-uh ns, -**dif**-ruh ns]*

- A. *lack of difference or distinction between two or more things.*
- B. *Absence of compulsion to or toward one thing or another.*

I have been known to frequently use the term “agnostic” in my talks and presentations on virtualization, but I have recently found that it really is an incorrect term to use in the context for which I was speaking. I have become a believer in what some techie bloggers refer to as the radical and eccentric mindset that the Hypervisor should not matter. I also happen to have an even firmer belief that the vendors that create the management tools that we use for those hypervisors should fully and completely embrace the definition of “Indifference” when they design and develop them.

Andrew Kutz is a developer and blogger that I have followed for a few years, and he wrote an opinion piece in April of 2008 entitled “[Ubiquitous underpinnings and idyllic interfaces - The virtualization ecosystem of the \(very near\) future](#)”, which told the tale of why the Hypervisor itself should not matter, but the tools necessary to manage them do. The last statement he makes in the article resonated to me that the indifference is the key –

“Software vendors that wish to play in the game need to produce idyllic interfaces that are fun, functional, interoperable, are delivered via the web, and can manage any of the ubiquitous hypervisors on the market.”

In my many years of working in the I.T. trenches, I have been subjected to having maybe a few dozen or so management applications that had to be installed on my machine in order for me just to get through my daily grind. When I ventured down the path of virtualization, I soon realized that their makers were going status-quo on me and making the same mistake that hundreds of vendors made before them, which is requiring proprietary management tools.

The era of requiring these types of tools is over. Or at least it should be. While not any real complete and useful administration-type software bits have come to reality yet, some vendors of individual pieces have already claimed their hypervisor independence, [Vizioncore](#) and [Abiquo](#) to name a few, and more appear to be moving towards the light. If the others would actually talk with (notice I said “with”, not “to”) and listen to their customers, I believe they would also understand that the terms “vendor-lock” and “proprietary” are not what us I.T. folks hold near and dear to our hearts.

A situation happened to me this year that relates to my quandary on this. I was at a large trade show in Las Vegas earlier this year (hint: it has the word Op in it), and two of the largest VDI vendors, I’ll call them Vendor A and B, were up on the stage,

giving both of their sides of why their product is superior to the others. After a few worthless self-promoting arguments from both sides, they started the Q&A session. I raised my hand, and I really only had one simple question for Vendor B, which was “When will their VDI product and associated management software support multiple hypervisors and not just theirs?” The vendor responded with “Truthfully, our customers aren’t asking for it”. That answer took me back a bit, and judging from the reaction from the others in the audience, they were as perplexed as I was. So, I had to ask the follow-up question of, “Are you actually asking your customers if they want that option?” I got a single “No” in response, and as quick as it came, they took the mic away and picked another question. It was like the guy had a big red button that he pushed on stage that told the mic wranglers, “Make him go away.”

Now, that type of reactive response from Vendor B may be limited to the traits of the person giving the response, but it is representative of their company as a whole as history and their releases have shown. All that they provide for their products, including their hypervisor, is a single proprietary and limited platform management solution, while their two main competitors boldly stand out and say, “Yes, we can manage them too.” Sure, those solutions are still more Beta than Gold Image, but it’s the point that they are turned into the right direction, and that is a the direction that most of us in I.T. want to follow

Is it a perfect world out there in technology land where everyone gets along and plays nice in the same sandbox? Not by a long shot, as I bet there is many a big player in the Virtualization camps that’ll steal your shovel and bucket faster than you can blink. But I’m not really asking for perfect, or even near perfect, just indifference. But maybe that’s too “radical”, or “eccentric”, or even “agnostic”.