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The New My VMware Portal – Tips & Misses

For as long as I can remember, most VMware customers that I have worked with had always dreaded the time when they had to use the now defunct Licensing Portal on VMware's website to do anything with their licenses. Finally, a few months back, VMware introduced the new My VMware portal which was designed to alleviate some of that pain and make working with VMware on multiple levels easier. Let's take a look at some tips on using the portal, along with some gripes on what I feel could really be improved on.

Initially after its beta testing was complete and the VMware team publicly launched the portal, many folks had a hard time just navigating the site. VMware created a large base of [Webinar Training and FAQ's](#) to try and ease some of that pain, but the issues then started to flow in from the users. To accommodate this somewhat large collection of KB article that reference not only the portal itself, but VMware account issues in general, VMware created its own [index of KB articles](#) just on these topics. I would suggest bypassing their [Top 10 Things to Know About My VMware](#) article as it, in my honest opinion, makes things more complicated to understand than is really necessary. The folks who write those things at VMware should really consider their wide audience a bit better and make things easier to understand, not harder.

Browsers - The very first thing I noticed about accessing the portal when I was involved in the beta testing is that it seems to work much better in terms of stability when I use my Google Chrome browser instead of Internet Explorer version 9. I'm not sure why, but I had a few crashes even after the public launch with IE and never had one with Chrome. I don't really use Firefox so I can't comment on its usage. On my Mac, Safari and Camino both worked well.

On this same topic, for those of you that have not yet seen [Josh Atwell's](#) video on his peculiar and very funny browser issue with My VMware, [check it out at this link](#). This issue justified a VMware KB article on it [here](#). I understand that clearing your cache eliminates quite a few issues with the new site and it has worked for me when something quirky comes up browser-wise.

The Interface – I like it and it is way better than what was offered previously. It's easy on the eyes and looks cleaner. My one suggestion here is to follow the breadcrumb navigation links in the upper left corner since, when going deep into the site, you can easily get lost trying to find your way back Home.

Remember to always save your changes! Due to the programming of the site, it sometimes appears that you have made a change but have not confirmed and committed it since you are taken away from where you were working on the task and brought back to the start. As an example, when you go to organize a large

amount of license keys and place them in folders, you are brought back to the initial license key screen instead of where you were, and this can be confusing.

Here are just a couple more tips - Pull what you want to the top by using folder names that include dashes or numbers. This will make your sorting of important ones easy. Also, remember that Notes do not carry over to licenses that are divided or combined, which is the same as it was previously (which should have been fixed but wasn't). Once you divide or combine licenses, be sure to change the Notes field.

The Support Element - When I click on the Support icon, I should be able to quickly see what support tickets I have open, along with the other options that are available today. Why can't you do that?

The License Element - By far my biggest complaint during beta testing and one of my pet peeves with licensing portals in general is why they would not include the functionality to allow a customer to print or export a listing of your licenses, contracts, or keys? At least with the old interface, you could create a scrolling screenshot or print the page as a PDF to get your information. Now, you can't even do that since you can only have one license or contract open at a time. I was told by VMware that it would be included when they went public, but it never happened. C'mon folks, it can't be that hard to code a simple Print or Export button in? Really? How much did you spend on this thing?

The Users & Permissions Element - A valuable tip on this section is to remember to look for the "gear" symbols with the dropdown arrow whenever you open a user, folder, or contract. There are more options given for control of those objects in those dropdown menus. Creating folders to organize these objects is especially helpful for folks with larger accounts and many objects. The concept of folders also expands in to other parts of the portal, such as licenses, for even more added convenience.

Also, by far this was the most commented and controversial element during the beta testing. Even after the released, it still remains one of the toughest for people to learn and understand. I believe that VMware, by trying to make permissions management easier for users, they actually made it more confusing. Attempting to assign users to contracts and alter the permissions those users have just seems more difficult than it needs to be.

Finally, the Mobile App. This is a good idea, but it really serves very little purpose since you cannot actually do anything with it. It is read-only and it requires you to go to the web portal to make any changes to your account. It also requires WiFi for the initial connection, which in today's 4G world is a bit ridiculous. Nice try VMware, but no.

All in all, I do like the look and feel of the new portal, but it still has some nagging quirks and programming issues that will keep me wanting something better (I still can't print or export my licenses? Really?). I know this would be tough for VMware

to swallow, but they really should consider taking a cue from Microsoft and their LiveID integrated portals with Volume Licensing and MSDN. The overall requisite should be to K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Stupid) and make the lives of your customers easier, not harder with pretty much requiring training just to use an Account Portal site. That's just the wrong way to go.