

Mike Nelson – SV article

Fusion & Parallels – Maybe Time For A Change

“When your finished changing, your finished.” – Ben Franklin

I’ve been a loyal VMware Fusion user for many years, actually since version 1.0 came out back in 2007. It has always been on my Macbook Pro which is used for almost all of my work, running several different flavors of Windows, and even a Linux distribution or two. I have heard of and seen a competing product called Parallels Workstation for MAC, but really never had any interest to try it since Fusion was always up to the task for me. I read some of the reviews for and against both products and was intrigued enough to take Parallels for a test drive to see maybe what I have been missing and if possibly one or the other could provide me more benefit for my virtualization administration tasks.

I went to the Parallels website and noticed that they had a Parallels [Desktop for MAC version 6 vs Fusion comparison write up](#), so I gave it once through. After sifting through the FUD, overall speed was the dominating theme on this page, but [another link at the bottom](#) got into a few other specifics and feature differences, [such as isolated VM’s and pause VM’s, which Fusion cannot yet do](#). Ok, time to try it for myself, so I downloaded the trial. Hmm, the first thing I was taken back by was a very short trial period of 14 days, compared to 30 days for Fusion. I really dislike that about some vendors, as they really appear to me to have no idea what it takes to find time to evaluate products, especially ones that compete against my tried and true Fusion. Sure, request another evaluation license; download another copy – all things I do not have time to waste on.

The install was pretty painless, except for the nagging “Trial Period” boxes that came up every time I started it (Ok, I get it, it’s a trial version. Leave me alone already). I went ahead and created a XP machine from an ISO using the wizard interface. After it was complete, I booted it up and played around a bit. After doing this for a while, I noticed a few things that I have not seen in Fusion that were interesting. The virtual network interfaces within Parallels can be customized very easily with a few clicks, whereas with Fusion, it is more difficult with scripts. One big plus I used was the ability to encrypt my virtual machines, which is something Fusion should have had long ago, and having all my VM’s on a portable drive makes this feature a serious contender in itself.

I went ahead and imported one of my current Fusion machines to see if there was any noticeable difference [in the time it takes to import and boot it that](#) I could see using an established image. [I imported the VM and booted it up, I was looking to see if importing images had an significant improvements over Fusion, and also wanted to see if the boot up time to user login was actually shorter](#). It seemed to take quite a bit longer to boot in Parallels the first time, but after another reboot, it did actually appear to boot faster than Fusion. I went through all of the basic stuff first, trying

out options and menus, rebooting and suspending, running apps and connecting to networks. All in all, I really did not notice anything that would sway me. Having the applications in the dock is a nice touch, along with the ability to mount VM's from Finder, which could prove itself very useful for updates and file changes.

There are several other differences between the two products and their companies and this not being a scientific (or even completely accurate for all uses of the products mentioned) comparison in any sense of the word, I will not go through them all. When it gets down to it, you need to have the tools that are right for you and the job you're trying to accomplish. For me, Fusion has covered this space very well over the last few years. But, I have to say that a few features of Parallels that would benefit me and my work has me thinking that it may be that time for a change. The great thing to keep in mind about these Type-2 hypervisors is that you can always go back, and you can always run them together. [For myself, I'll keep running and digging deeper on both to see if something puts me over the edge and I make the move from Fusion to Parallels. Or, at least until the trial period ends, of course.](#)