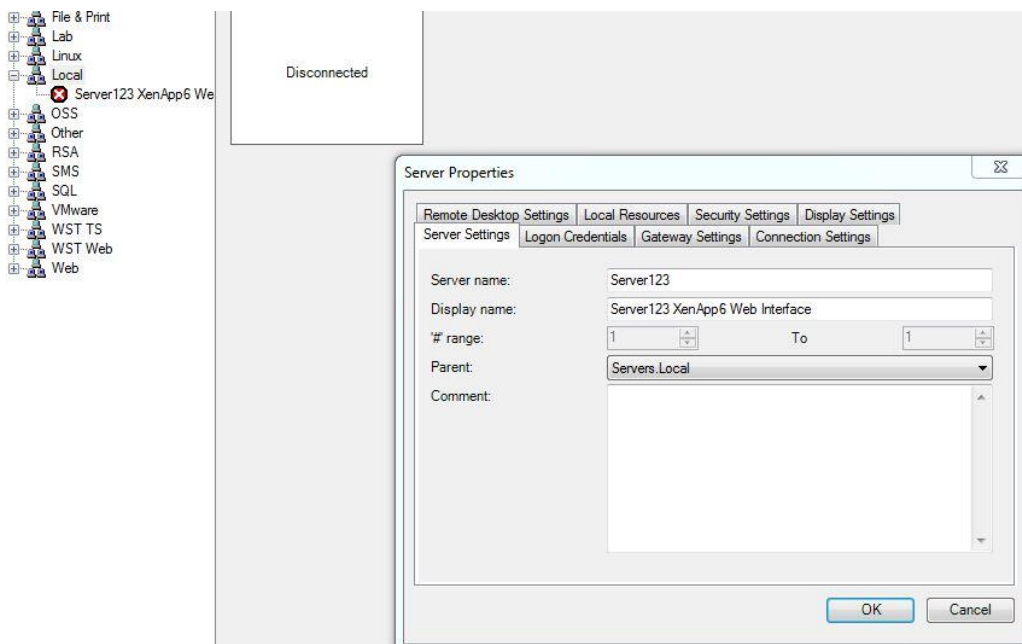


## RDC Manager 2.2 Released from Microsoft's Internal Goodie Bag

A friend of mine sent me an email awhile back saying that Microsoft had just pulled another in-house only tool out of their hat and made it available for public download. Knowing that many releases of such gems, that are kept tightly under wraps by the Microsofties, have been added to my essential Admin Toolbox and proven their worthiness, I had to check it out. It's called RDC Manager, or RDCMan for short, and it is released publicly as version 2.2. I came to learn that this tool was created by a developer on the Live Experiences Team (you can read more about that here - <http://msexchangeteam.com/archive/2010/06/11/455115.aspx>) as a way to overcome the relative non-flexibility of the native Remote Desktop Connection Client to handle multiple RDP connections.

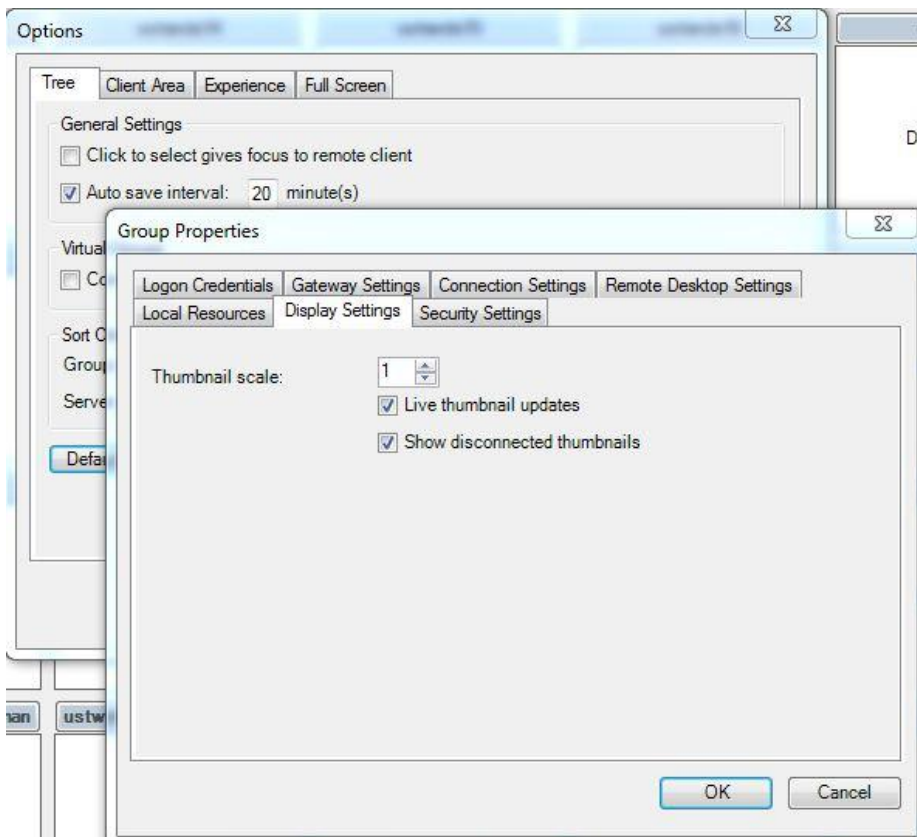
On the download site, it tells the usual story that goes along with these tools, which is that it is an internally developed tool and not supported by Microsoft in any way. So I downloaded the bits, installed it, and launched it on my Windows 7 32bit test machine (It also installed and ran fine on a Windows 7 64bit desktop). The RDC Client version 6 or better is required for it to work.

At first look, I liked the simple and clean two pane interface. My first task was to see if there was any way to get my existing RDP connections imported so as to not have to go through the burden of re-entering the 50 or so that I have. I had an older tool that I used for RDP connections, which was the original freeware version of Remote Desktop from Visionapp, still installed on my lab desktop which keeps the connections in a proprietary coded file. I had serious doubts that RDC Manager could import any of those connections, but I also had several of them tucked away in the registry since the native RDP stores all that information there, ready to be read and used. After checking all the options, I found that the only way to import any connections is via a text file. The only other option is to input each one individually, although they do give an option to add servers that have incremental numbers (who has that in real life?). I did catch in the help file that they are taking the option to import from a text file out in a future edition and you'll need to modify the XML connection files directly, which seems like a step back rather than forward.



The Connection Properties Screen 1

Once I added a few server connections to it, I started to look deeper into the options and structure. You can organize connections by groups, with top-level hierarchies, and you can even load multiple connection definition files, called “.rdg” files. The servers are presented on the second pane as thumbnails, and the options for each connection are pretty much what you can define within a native RDP session, with a few exceptions. One option I use quite a bit is the ability to add descriptions for each connection, since servers are not always named intuitively to what their purposes are. The drawback in the interface is that the descriptions are placed in-line with the server name, making it difficult to see and manage the two panes at the same time. There is a Comments field offered, but I cannot find anywhere on the screen that it is shown when highlighting the server. Putting that description on the status bar or even as a hover tooltip would be much better.



Default Group Properties Screen 1

I also had an issue with the thumbnail views of the servers. Whenever I hovered over a thumbnail, the screen takes your keyboard focus and delivers it to the connection. This is a problem especially when you accidentally input a keystroke that could cause your server to do something undesirable, like shutdown. The Live Thumbnail Updates option is nice when performing several tasks on several machines at once.

Overall, RDC Manager is a good tool, but it is only useful for RDP connections and it still has some big drawbacks in the interface. If you are strictly a Windows Admin and want a tool to do nothing but RDP, then this is for you. I highly recommend using a more agnostic and flexible connection manager, such as [Remote Desktop Manager Standard Edition](#) from Devolutions Software or [Terminals](#), which is available on [CodePlex](#). Both of these products provide you with a wealth of options, including security, network tools, shared connection databases, a large selection of connection types (RDP, SSH, VNC, FTP, etc.), post connect command execution, and best of all, they are also free.

Download RDC Manager here - <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=4603c621-6de7-4ccb-9f51-d53dc7e48047&displaylang=en>