

Mike Nelson – SVD article

Sampling Some ThinApp Alternatives

[ThinApp](#) from VMware is really a great product for virtualizing, sandboxing, and packaging applications. Citrix has their Application Streaming product, as does Microsoft with APP-V to round out the more widely used competing products. But, if you know me, I'm always looking out for the alternative application that can provide the same type of basic functionality at (hopefully) a reduced cost. Let's take a sampling of some of the alternatives for ThinApp that are out there and how they might save you some time and money in your environment.

Before I start, I have to give some much deserved credit to a few guys that created something called [Project VRC](#). The VRC stands for Virtual Reality Check. Ruben Spruijt, Jeroen van de Kamp, and Sven Hulsman created this excellent resource which objective is to study and test the overall impact of Application Virtualization impact within VDI. While this article goes beyond VDI to even traditional desktops, their information is invaluable to anyone who is considering a solution for their environment. Be sure to check it out.

[Spoon Studio](#) - Spoon used to be called Xenocode and, before changing their name earlier this year, was more widely recognized as an OEM product from Novell called [Zenworks Application Virtualization](#). For whatever reason, they are now called Spoon and they have the Spoon Studio product, along with Spoon Server and Spoon.net. Spoon is very easy to use and can integrate with either a physical type of delivery system (such as USB or Spoon Server), or their cloud offering at spoon.net. It is a very versatile product, but is still a bit pricier at \$1995 to start. Take it for a trial run to see if its right for you before you buy.

[Evalaze](#) – This product is newer to the market and is made in Germany. It has three editions available, a free Private Edition, Professional edition, and Commercial edition. The free edition is severely limited in features as compared to the other two, but it does allow for unlimited number of virtualized applications. I wanted to download and trail the Professional edition, but they do not offer any such link. However, they do have a link for a trial version of the Commercial edition, which basically includes the proverbial kitchen sink of tools for your use, including distribution licenses and technical support. I attempted to send a request for the trial, but the web page consistently produced an error when I did the submission. It looks promising from what I can tell from their marketing, but you'll need to judge for yourself if you can get them to answer! Also, they have a second product offering that is an application virtualization "service", whereas they will take the application and files that you upload to them and create the virtualized package for you. That is kind of cool in today's world of SaaS ideas.

[InstallFree](#) – This is a tough one. I really like the interface, pricing (free or subscription based), and the versatility of this product. What I don't like is that you

must have an internet connection to use it. In reality, it doesn't provide the same "offline" functionality of ThinApp or the others and really should not be considered if that is a requirement, which it is almost always for me. If having your application available offline is not a deal-breaker for you, then you should consider this product.

[Portable Apps](#) – I love Portable Apps. It is simply a basic way to create and carry your applications wherever you go on a USB stick or drive. It is really what ThinApp started out to be, but then VMware evolved it into this very large package with added functionality. But, sometimes, you just need an application to be portable. And that is what this product does and it does it well. I believe that all administrators should have this as a core item in their Admin Toolbox. Best of all it's free, it requires no registration, and it never nags you. Just a great, solid piece of code.

[Symantec Workspace Streaming](#) – This product is probably the most used by administrators that want to virtualize as many applications as possible, or want to micro-manage their application license tracking. It really does a great job virtualizing more applications than ThinApp, but it also requires a client agent and streaming server, which ThinApp does not. It also lacks an intuitive user interface and is clouded by difficult Symantec licensing and support. Generally, ThinApp is more "portable", if you will, than the Symantec product, and has more features aimed at flexibility rather than complexity.

Like I said in the beginning of this article, I love ThinApp. It truly is a very flexible, easy to use, and versatile product. Although I still believe that we have a need for what was the true beginnings of ThinApp, such as Portable Apps, it is on the forefront of the application virtualization software market and will most likely remain there for some time to come.