

## Mike Nelson – SVD Article

### Virtual Desktop Annoyances

There are really two distinct ways to look at Virtual Desktops in I.T., one from a user's perspective and the other from an administrator's perspective. Of course, given the nature of the two, not everyone in these two camps will agree on what is the best implementation of the environment, and certainly may not agree on the overall experience either. But, there are common threads between both groups that deal with the annoyances that come with VDI, and in this article, I'll outline some of the ones that seem to stand out more often than not.

#### Profiles –

This group really isn't an annoyance if it is setup and configured right from the get go of the VDI implementation. If it isn't, it can be troublesome to change after the fact, and can generate more dismay amongst the user base. The average user wants a virtual desktop that is pretty much the same as what they had when they had a physical workstation, or if they are provided both a physical and virtual desktop, they really want them to mirror each other when they log into them. This is where profiles come in.

Whether your shop has mandatory, roaming, or a hybrid mixture of both, I recommend implementing a Profile Management solution to help ease the pain. There are several good Profile Management products that can assist with this and even take the profile management out of AD to simplify the administration. Two products that I have had very good success with are [Immidio's FlexProfiles](#) and [AppSense](#). While FlexProfiles focuses mainly on the profiles themselves, AppSense goes much further with their Environment Manager package, making the user experience and back end administration very solid and very easy to administer.

#### Visuals –

As I have mentioned before in articles about the user experience with virtual desktops, conversations with users always seem to come back to the visual aspects of the virtual desktop. Much advancement has been made in just the last year or so on the visual experience with the introduction of new and improved client protocol technologies, client embedded devices, and datacenter GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) involvement. Still today, the consensus is to strip the visual experience down in the virtual desktop by removing the eye candy and removing the other excess overhead. But, in the end, the users still want that same look and feel that they have with their physical desktop.

#### Speed –

This has been probably the most talked about problem with VDI since its inception. There are so many variables involved on this topic, from the backend to the frontend of the environment, that I refer to it as the "black hole" of VDI. If you think about it, the only thing that really matters in terms of user productivity is that if it takes a user 10 seconds to perform a task on their physical desktop, and it takes 30 seconds to do the same task on a virtual one, depending on your parameters and acceptance of that measurement, you may have just lost the war. The implementation of different storage types, network segmentation and isolation, and even the integration of client hypervisors on the client are proving to be very effective in increasing the overall speed of the virtual desktop.

#### Redundancy and Disaster Recovery –

This seems to be something that many VDI vendors left out of their feature lists when they developed their products, or they simply downplayed that it was even necessary. Now, they may have enhanced their offerings with later additions or updates, but this really should have been something that came out and was fairly easy to implement in their dot-0 products. If the infrastructure cannot sustain the ability to failover to another means of delivering a user desktop, and hopefully the same user desktop, then you are at a single point of failure. In some environments, that just doesn't go over well, if at all. Virtual Disk corruption was a common issue when VDI first came out, and it is still somewhat today. Thankfully, the vendors have stepped up and produced some products or interesting work-arounds to meet this dilemma. Even vendors that supply virtual backup solutions are touting their products for redundancy and disaster recovery for VDI. Only time will tell (and it will be that one time you have an outage, of course) on this annoyance and the possible solutions.

#### Accessibility –

This one is easy. Nowadays, if you can't get to your virtual desktop via a thin client, smartphone, tablet, watch computer, or whatever, then this becomes an annoyance. Personally, if I can get to my virtual desktop via my VPN connection, then I expect to be able to get to it on my Android. By not providing those means of accessibility as they become available, more often than not, users will come asking for them. As one project I worked on spelled out the "Utopia" experience – "any device, anywhere, anytime". Now that would be nice.

#### Administration –

If you know me, I'll be getting on my soapbox for this one. Simply put, make administration easier. Having two or three different interfaces just to administer a complete VDI solution is not effective or even reasonable to me. We should all be looking for getting closer to that "single pane of glass", and the vendors should start stepping up and standardizing their products to have the ability to deliver that, but that is not all. They should be doing whatever they can to make IT job easier and common administrative tasks, terminology, and interfaces will go a long way to win our hearts.