

Mike Nelson – SVD article

### **VDI – Preparing for Implementation with Testing User Acceptance**

Now that you have your VDI project underway and the infrastructure is built, what's next? Well, it should be testing, and with VDI, that testing should involve the users that will actually be using the virtual desktops. Let's take a look at a few ways to get the testing done right, which should lead to a successful go-live for your organization.

Back in 2008 during the VDI "Boom" era when everyone just had to have virtual desktop, I.T. departments and Consultants were scrambling to get the infrastructures built and get the desktops to the users with eager wide-eyed managers and CxO's looking over their shoulders. But, as we all know, when you basically rush something that can be complex and tightly integrated, some of the pieces get left behind or simply fall off. One of those pieces was testing the user acceptance and it is a very important piece to a successful VDI deployment.

There has been many a conversation around failed VDI deployments and why they failed. Some of the easier factors to blame are excessive management control, poorly designed infrastructure, or just plain bad planning. I would suggest that some failed due to a lack of effective testing with the user base. I have been involved in more than a few instances where I am working with a company that has either a partially or completely failed VDI implementation, and one of the first questions I ask is how they did their methodology for user testing. More than once, I get a response like, "Well, we tested them with the I.T. staff and it worked fine." That was pretty much the extent of their user testing. Given that type of response, I would strongly suggest to them why and how to do it better in the future. Here are some things that should be considered when getting your VDI project into user testing. Please keep in mind that these should be flexible based on the size of the implementation and user base.

**Know Your Users** – By this I don't mean just knowing their names or where they work. You need to create relationships and get a real understanding of what jobs they do. That being said, I do know that this may prove to be a challenge with larger shops, especially being a Consultant, so maybe a supervisor or chosen tech-savvy user(s) is your best avenue.

**Watch Your Users Work with Their Desktops**– Most people don't like having someone watch over their shoulder all day long while they work, and you by no means have to take it to that extent, but you should take a little time and watch how your users interact with their desktops while they do their daily work (The same large shop condition applies as it did above). You need to see what they see, what they expect, and what, if any, nuances they may have.

**Tailor Your Testing** – Now that you have filled your notebook with all the user information from the previous steps, it's time to create the test environment. I

usually recommend developing testing methodology that covers all of your expected users, although that all depends on what your individual project definitions are. Some important things to keep in mind when doing this –

- *Set User Expectations Up-front* – While it would be a perfect world for you to be able to supply all of things that a user wants in a desktop, most of the time, it's just not practical or even efficient. Create the test desktops to mimic the bare minimums right off the bat. This way, you can always “add” later instead of “taking away”.
- *Walk through a sample desktop with a user* – You don't have to sit there and do a lot of hand-holding on this, just get a feel for what they experience and what comments they make about it.
- *Educate (or at least attempt to) the User on the Concept of VDI* – Most users may not know that they are running a virtual desktop, but I find that there are some out there that actually interested that they are. Take the opportunity to show off some of your expertise, while not getting too technical of course. And while you're doing that, make sure to educate them on just how efficient and *faster* (use that word since it has more end user appeal) their virtual desktop will be without all the extra stuff running on it, like their picture desktops, weather gadgets, and such. The point is to use this time to impress on users that all the bells and whistles almost always means a slower desktop experience.

Lastly, one thing that I cannot stress enough if to make sure you allow enough time for testing for your users, and then add 20%. More testing should mean better and more thorough testing that is done by both I.T. and the users. Tried and true experience should tell you that the more you put into it, the outcome will be of a successful VDI implementation for you, your organization, and your users.