eBook

4 **Facts** You Need to Know About Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) to Support Remote Employees

NAVISITE

Implementing a widescale work-from-home program might not be a new idea, but even the most enthusiastic telecommuting evangelists could not have predicted the world in which we now live, where entire companies (or close to it) are working from home.

Consider the impact of such a change on the traditional IT department: typically, companies have to purchase and customize laptops for each remote worker, which requires time and resources to set up, configure and manage. That's ok if your IT team planned ahead. But if you suddenly need 50 or 100 or 500 extra laptops to support a remote workforce—installed with all the appropriate applications and security controls—then you're going to contend with logistical, financial and security challenges. For businesses with limited staff and resources, this creates an untenable situation.

The good news is that changes in cloud computing—particularly with the public cloud and flexible licensing models—have made it possible to cost-effectively support remote employees through virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) technology.

VDI has been around for years, and many organizations do have successful programs in place. So, what's different about VDI today versus in the past? And how can it meet the needs of resource-constrained organizations that don't have time to waste?

Read on to learn about four need-to-know facts about VDI that can help your organization determine the right solution for your business—and deploy a work-from-home program without compromising security, performance and compliance.

FACT 1:

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VDI Is a True Enterprise-Class Solution

In a VDI solution, the operating system and applications are separated from the computer and hosted in a private or public cloud. Because everything is centrally managed from the cloud, employees can work from anywhere, on any device that connects to the internet, whether it's a company-managed laptop or personal device.

VDI's unique architecture enables companies to maintain full control and compliance over corporate applications and data while providing just the right amount of access to remote workers. With minimal effort, you can provision and tailor virtual desktops with highly specialized, performance-intensive applications to meet the needs of certain individuals or entire departments.

This type of enterprise-grade scalability, accessibility and management makes it possible to work in new and innovative ways. For instance, instead of having to send large files back and forth that may take hours to download to individual computers, globally dispersed teams can access those files in the cloud, without experiencing the latency and performance issues associated with large workloads.

FACT 2:

There Are Three Types of VDI

VDI comes in three flavors—private cloud hosted VDI, private cloud DaaS (desktop as a service) and public cloud. The following includes a quick overview of the pros and cons of each approach.

HOSTED VDI

In this scenario, the VDI platform runs in the company's data center. If you want total control over your environment and have the data center space and staff to manage it, this can be a very attractive option. The potential drawbacks are that it does require specialized knowledge and ongoing maintenance from your in-house team, and hardware and software purchase quantities must be based on peak usage. In other words, you may end up paying for resources you aren't using.

DaaS

This is for companies that want to outsource the management of VDI to a service provider. The provider manages all of the VDI infrastructure in a hosted data center and helps the company build out desktop images and support end-users. If you choose this option, the service provider takes on the heavy lifting, rather than your IT staff. It's worth noting, though, that scaling with DaaS still requires the physical installation of servers and other infrastructure components. This will need to be factored into your business continuity program, so you can be prepared to support surges in demand and any subsequent scale-down.

PUBLIC CLOUD

The third type of virtual desktop has escalated in popularity over the past few years. With hyperscalers like Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Microsoft® Azure® offering virtual desktops in the public cloud, companies can cost-effectively scale up or down based on need, without incurring the costs or risks associated with building and managing a VDI solution internally. Additionally, users of Microsoft's VDI enjoy tight integration with Microsoft® Office 365®, which is one of the most popular productivity suites in use today. However, like any solution, it still needs to be properly implemented and supported. With this option, you can either manage this responsibility in-house or tap the expertise of a service provider to help design, deploy and manage the VDI for you.

FACT 3:

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VDI Is Ideal for Multiple Use Cases

We've already touched on the first use case: remote workers. But VDI is also popular with organizations employing short-term or contract workers. VDI lets you provide these temporary employees with specific internal resources, without granting access to the full corporate VPN or company infrastructure.

In this case, short-term or contract employees only have access to the data and systems they need to do their jobs—and nothing more. When their employment is over, you shut off their access. For additional security measures, you can disable download or clipboard functionality. This can dramatically reduce third-party risk from the contractor community.

Finally, VDI is beneficial for design teams and other employees using graphics-intensive applications. With VDI, desktops can be configured with GPUs for CAD or similar applications. And because files are centrally managed from the cloud, multiple users can collaborate without large data transfers.

FACT 4:

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VDI Can Be Deployed Quickly

VDI can be deployed quickly, but it depends on a few factors. The most obvious is whether you're planning to build and manage your own VDI environment or plug into a public cloud solution. With the public cloud, you don't have to contend with physical infrastructure, which will significantly speed your time to deployment.

The second factor is the level of sophistication of your VDI solution. If you only need to deploy a single desktop image for all users (i.e., everyone gets access to all the same data and applications), and you're a Microsoft shop moving to Azure's VDI, then it can be deployed in a matter of days. This is an excellent solution for many organizations that simply want to enable their remote employees and don't have special requirements.

On the other hand, there are organizations that need to deploy multiple desktop images to achieve granular control over user access and applications. In this scenario, the VDI solution may take some time initially to design and deploy. The key is understanding what your needs are and determining whether you have the expertise and time in-house to support a more complex deployment and ongoing management.

To learn how Navisite can help your organization support remote employees with a fully managed, scalable and secure Windows Virtual Desktop (WVD), download this data sheet or contact us today.

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ABOUT NAVISITE

Navisite is a modern managed cloud service provider that accelerates IT transformation for thousands of growing and established global brands. Through our deep technical knowledge and strategic relationships with the world's leading cloud providers, proven delivery methodologies, platform-agnostic approach and worldwide network of highly specialized experts, we provide the capabilities and practical guidance customers need to successfully embrace IT change and move their businesses forward. Let us partner with you to navigate the now—learn more at navisite.com.