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Key Considerations for End-User Management

The Essentials Series

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Resolving BYOD Challenges and Enabling Workplace Mobility

Companies of all sizes face an ongoing struggle to manage the proliferation of end-user devices and demands. Thus far, no single technology solution has been available that provides IT the control they need and end users the flexibility and functionality that they require. Recently, new technology suites have emerged to fill the gaps in end-user management. In this virtualization essentials series, you'll find out about the latest end-user management solution choices, the new use cases that can now be fulfilled in end-user management, and how to select the right end-user management solution for your company.

Traditionally, workers were tied to their desk and desktop computer. If they weren't at their desk, work just wasn't getting done. Even salespeople would gather up their orders from the field and enter them when they return to the office. Then, technology allowed workers to work from home or to connect to the company with a company laptop. This setup allowed companies to expect availability (and perhaps even more productivity) from their workers. The employees generally accepted that they would provide greater output in trade for greater work flexibility. IT, who was responsible for supporting this configuration, had to increase their output in order to make all of this possible through various remote access solutions (most still in use today). Although none of these solutions was perfect for the end user and they complicated the life of IT, once remote access was adopted by a few, there was no going back.

The State of Workforce Mobility and BYOD

Today, remote access has evolved to the point where most employees and management expect applications and data to be available 24x7 and be accessible from anywhere on the globe. The idea of workforce mobility means that your workplace is wherever you are. No longer is work limited to a single, physical location. You can work from your office desk just as well as you can work from the local coffee shop or an airplane that offers Wi-Fi.

With employees working anywhere and everywhere, more and more employees want to work from their own devices, or multiple devices, across multiple platforms. With the consumerization of IT, initially employees wanted to use their own home computer for company work. Later, the request to use their own device also applied to their own personal laptop, tablet, and cellphone. As you can imagine, most IT groups have tried to block employee-owned devices from accessing the enterprise network as a result of both security fears and supportability questions. What companies have found is that blocking simply doesn't work. Blocking personal devices from company networks results in lost productivity, Orwellian policies, and indignation towards IT. However, the best approach is to embrace a "bring your own device" (BYOD) policy and enterprise mobility management system that creates productive and efficient employee while protecting the company's information assets.



Figure 1: Companies welcome BYOD.

Empowering Workforce Mobility

With increased expectations for workplace mobility and with BYOD on the rise, enterprises are searching for the right solution. Interestingly enough, what most have found is that because enterprises, their applications, and their users are all so different, there isn't just one "right solution."

Instead, companies have discovered that an end-to-end platform is available. This platform of products is best because it offers a variety of enterprise mobility solutions to the admin as well as the end user. With different workplace mobility solutions to choose from, IT pros can select the best workplace mobility options for the job.

For example, instead of IT pushing just a single solution like VDI, with the suite approach, IT can map the needs of the employee to the best workforce mobility option. As the vast majority of end users today use the Windows OS on their desktop, what businesses really have to ask yourself is "How do you want to deliver Windows as a Service (WaaS)?" This WaaS could be delivered through a Web browser, on a tablet, through a thin-client device, with a software application on a laptop, through a single-streamed Windows application, or with an offline Windows desktop that is synchronized back to the data center once online.

Experts agree that the three workforce mobility solutions businesses should be considering are: virtual desktop solutions, mobility solutions, and centralized physical desktop management solutions.

Virtual Desktop Solutions

The first option is the traditional virtualized desktop option. Although this solution might be the option that has been around the longest (of these three), it's also one of the most popular options for a good reason. With the virtual desktop option, OS, apps, and company data never leave the data center and end users access their desktop through a hardware thin client or software. Desktop images can all be linked back to a single virtual disk image to save vast amounts of disk space. With desktop images staying in control, OS upgrades, new application installs, and protection of end-users' data is easy.

Enterprise Mobility Management Solutions

The second option is to use the latest enterprise mobility management options to combine virtualized streaming applications and mobile document management. This category includes mobile device management, mobile application management, and mobile content management. The result is to become device agnostic and simply focus on giving end users the application and data access they really need, all securely accessible through a Web portal.

By doing so, IT can eliminate the headaches related to end-user device OS management and make end users more efficient by simply giving them what they need to do their job, wherever and whenever they need it.

Centralized Management of Physical Desktop Endpoints

The final option is a new and unique solution that fits between the previous two options. The solution creates a centralized image repository for every device based on the three logical layers discussed earlier—OS, apps, and user data. Because of how it is designed, a centralized image solution with advanced synchronization between server and end-user devices is an ideal “middle ground” for those who still have physical desktops and laptops but want the benefits that VDI solutions offer. With the separation of the logical layers, the applications can be added to or upgraded, at any time, without impacting end users.

Considerations for Selecting End-User Management Solutions

When selecting an end-user management solution, it's important to consider options that make the logical separation between OS, apps, and end-user data. Any solution that doesn't provide that separation is bound to be less efficient.

As workplace mobility requires the ability to access the same applications no matter where workers venture, the most important things to remember are:

- Ensure that you have a suite of options available to you so that you can “select the right tool for the job”
- Focus on “end-user management” and not “end-user device management” that is aware of the *context* of the mobile user and automates, on-demand, self-service access to the right apps and data across devices
- Use solutions that make a logical separation between OS, apps, and end-user data as these solutions will be much more efficient than trying to manage end-user devices, as a whole

Summary

Today's enterprise IT groups must be prepared to offer a broad set of technologies—from VDI to app layering—in order to meet the competitive needs of a rapidly evolving mobile workforce.