

Your complete guide to Hosted Desktop

Hosted Desktop for Business



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Hosted Desktops Today

As industry analysts recently pointed out, “the time for dabbling in cloud computing is over” so while for many 2013 was a year of planning and implementing cloud strategies, 2014 is set to see more adoption than ever before in the cloud. Many common security and reliability issues have now been mitigated and the adoption of cloud services is rapidly increasing across businesses and organisations in all sectors.



Over the last year, Hosted Virtual Desktop (HVD) is the cloud solution experiencing the most significant growth.

Gartner predicts that adoption of HVD's alone will reach as high as 78 million users by 2016. In today's economically challenging environment, businesses and other organisations are seeking solutions to increase workplace flexibility, enhance employee mobility, make businesses scalable, minimise operational costs and keep valuable data secured at all times.

“Hosted Desktop can increase security and help organisations meet compliance and standards”

Gartner

An ever growing number of businesses have already trusted HVD solutions for this as the cloud is the most practical answer to a number of common challenges many businesses and organisations are facing, especially when it comes to security and data protection issues.

What is the guide about?

This guide aims to give you the answers to some of the questions that typically arise before adoption of HVD, questions that many businesses ask before making that final decision. The guide will give you an opportunity to:

- Understand what Hosted Virtual Desktop really is and how it works
- Learn about its most key features and benefits
- See how effective it is as a long term IT solution proving better returns
- And a lot more...

So let's get started!

What is a Hosted Desktop?

A hosted desktop is a cloud computing service which allows a user to utilise a virtual desktop computer from a wide variety of devices such as a smartphone, tablet, laptop or a PC that is connected to the internet. The user can log into their individual desktop which contains all of the files, folders and applications that would usually be on their traditional desktop PC at the office. Access is achieved via a secure web browser using a two-factor authenticated login, even over a mobile 3G/4G connection.

Once accessed, the hosted desktop can contain all the user's personal and company data, email and applications they would use on a daily basis in a familiar Windows 7 style environment. The service can still be managed by the IT team who can choose who has access and to what resources. However, the hosting provider supplies, supports and maintains the server hardware.

This can help boost efficiency and productivity with users able to work from any location, anytime and the data being more secure than stored on a local device that can be lost or stolen.

How does it work?

Instead of the user logging into a traditional computer under their desk, the user connects remotely to a virtual computer in a secure UK based ISO-27001 datacentre.



Users can choose practically any internet ready device and access the Hosted Desktop using a secure web browser through a Citrix Access Gateway. For added security, you can choose a secure two-factor authenticated login, which works by the user entering their username to login and the system sending a one-time unique passphrase instantly to their mobile phone that is to be entered in order to complete the login.



Did you know?

You can use hosted desktop on any device that has internet connection through WiFi or mobile 3G/4G at anytime including your favourite smartphone

How does it work? (continued)

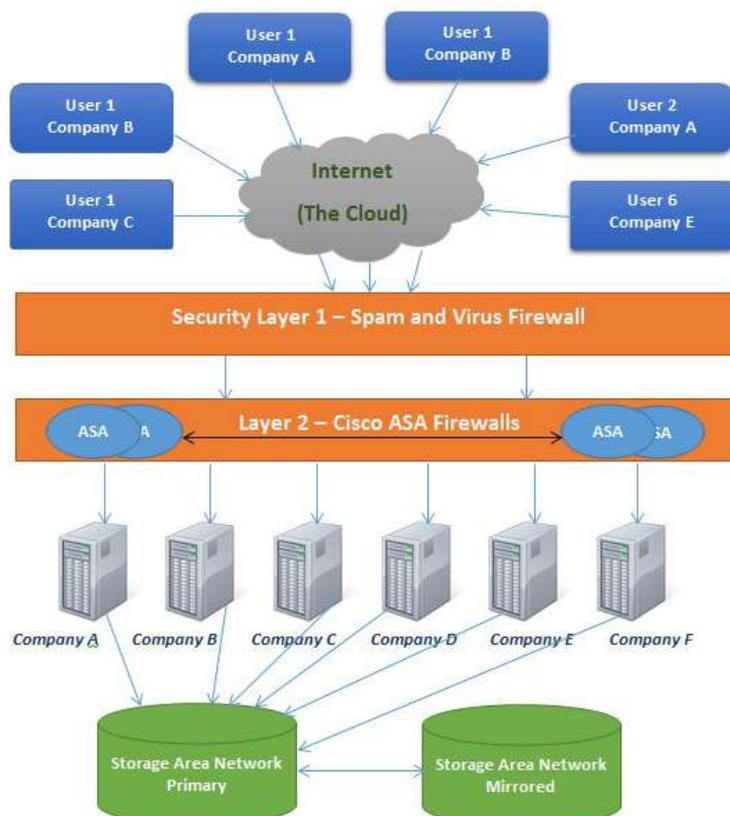
Once logged in, the user is presented with a familiar Windows 7 style desktop experience with all the features of a regular desktop, from web browsers to their mailbox, all the company applications they have access to and of course Microsoft Office where this has been included. If you want to share files and data between users, then the service can be configured to allow this just as it can on an internal IT network.

The desktop service is delivered using Citrix - the leading access technology for cloud desktop solutions that offers higher speeds and has lower bandwidth requirements than the traditional RDP accessed solution. RDP style desktops are still an option if any would prefer, and in fact are still very popular with more traditional office based businesses that do not necessarily require all the bells and whistles that Citrix delivers.

Citrix is less demanding on resources than RDP and can offer more for a client in terms of performance and stability. RDP, on the other hand, can be a more cost effective option, provided that a user does not use demanding programs which require a lot of computer resources such as graphic suites and editors.

To help you understand the concept of a hosted desktop, i.e. the mechanism of cloud computing and how the information flows from your desktop to the secured datacentre, we have created simple diagram below. It explains that a Hosted Desktop can greatly improve efficiency, flexibility and productivity both in and outside the workplace by providing instant access to resources anywhere, for a low monthly price.

Figure a: the basic structure of how a cloud computing infrastructure works



How easy is it to adopt?

Although migrating any IT to the cloud with a Hosted Desktop takes some planning and preparation, it is not as difficult as many new adopters would first think. The users' desktops themselves can be created and rolled out in a matter of hours. From then, there are a number of methods available, based on the circumstances of each migration, for adding required applications to the App server and migrating all data over to the datacentre where it can be distributed across the desktops as required.

A professional hosting provider will assign an appropriate technician who will agree a suitable migration path with you and also be happy to liaise with existing application vendors with regard to best practice for migrating each application where required.

How can Hosted Desktop support my business?

Recent surveys have showed that the top 5 reasons businesses adopt the cloud are cost efficiency, flexibility, productivity, scalability and data or network security reasons. But what does that mean in real terms? Here, we will have a look at each of these reasons and some typical challenges businesses face with traditional IT and how hosting can help by either resolving or relieving these issues.

• Reducing IT Costs

The Challenge

Your business is looking at growth but needs much more predictable IT costs for planning the future from an IT perspective. You also need keep hardware spending

down, introduce new applications and resources and use them with your current estate of potentially aging and slower PC's which might still not be compatible or quick enough for the latest applications.

The Solution

The hosted desktop is designed for use with the hardware you have now, not the PC's and laptops on your wish list. There is a remote computer dedicated for each of your users in the cloud which you access via a secure Citrix gateway using a very small amount of bandwidth to provide a secure link to your hosted desktop.

Once the link is made, you are using the computing resources of the datacentre, so even on old hardware your latest applications can run smoothly and because of the datacentre speeds, even your internet browsing may be faster than it is on your local machine.

So there is no need to update the hardware specifically to use your desktop. Even better, as and when your old PC's reach the end of their lives, you can replace them with much cheaper thin client PC's that can boot directly into your hosted desktop, with users able to login from anywhere.

In addition, because you have a fixed monthly cost per desktop, you can more accurately predict what your future IT costs will be as you grow and scale the system, without the capital cost of having to purchase new servers and keep up with the latest operating systems. This leaves the business with a predictable and scalable IT model that grows with your business, without the hassle of maintenance and depreciation of server hardware and software.

"HVDs can help improve the security standing of the client computing environment by centralizing sensitive information and applications in the data center, giving IT system and security stakeholders the opportunity not only to improve support efficiency, but also security"

Gartner

• Network and Data security

The Challenge

You need to give your users remote and mobile access to company data and applications, shared resources and files and not only manage who can access all that but also a wide variety of devices that might belong to the user not the business itself. How can you manage this effectively across your traditional network without compromising security and access to data by unauthorised personnel?

The Solution

Hosting providers invest in far more complex security and failover measures than any individual business will typically spend. Everything from advanced Cisco and other firewalls to high tech anti-spam and virus appliances and even superfast connectivity from multiple carriers to ensure constant connectivity even where an exchange goes down by routing through alternative carriers.

• Managing Scalability

The Challenge

A company may rapidly scale up or down employees for specific periods of the year, for instance during holiday seasons and other peak periods, all depending on the industry and business nature. Whenever the peak time is, this is when IT resources need to be instantly scalable and cost effective. During these most busy times with a traditional IT model, it can be difficult to resource correctly, often with the answer being to over resource with fixed hardware assets which remain underutilised during quieter times.

The Solution

A Hosted desktop service is completely flexible and can be scaled up or down according to the particular demands of the business during any period. Users can be added and removed easily, with the business only paying for the resources it needs, at the point of the actual requirement. If a new employee will benefit from a hosted desktop this can be distributed to them with all of the applications they need within minutes and because none of the data is stored locally, it is ideal for users who may be using their own device to access the network (BYOD).

This rapid scalability adds real IT flexibility and allows your business a predictable future IT cost without the usual need for capital investment as you grow.

• Increasing Productivity

The Challenge

Your business has a new software application to roll out across the network, distributed to your users. This can often be time consuming and require certain users to return devices such as laptops for software to be installed costing productivity time. Some devices may no longer support the software requirements causing the need to upgrade equipment.

The Solution

By default, applications such as Adobe Reader, Microsoft Office 2013, Outlook and Internet explorer are installed into your desktop user profile. In addition, you will be provided with an application server on which all of your additional applications are hosted, then user access distributed to which ever hosted desktop profiles you need, with all that being centrally managed.

These applications can be launched in the hosted desktop from any device including iOS devices, Android, Microsoft Windows, Linux or Mac OSX devices and Laptop/Desktop computers.

The client who is using the hosted desktop will not need to worry about their computer spec as they are simply opening a new Windows environment and can use whatever is running on the desktop on any device.

• Improve Flexibility

The Challenge

Users may travel often, work from home or may need the ability to work from remote locations. A user may need to move documents into shared areas for different departments within a business or may need to quickly

and easily access their data internally, for example during client meetings.

The Solution

With a secure cloud desktop, users can access their files and applications from anywhere via Wi-Fi network on a tablet, smartphone, a laptop etc, or even if there is only a 3G/4G mobile connection available enabling the workload to be fully synced across devices in the cloud. This allows users to become more productive and improves business mobility by giving the entire computer desktop whenever and wherever needed.



Did you know?

Hosted desktop solution can be used on:

- iOS devices such as the iPads, iPod touch and iPhones
- Apple Mac devices such as Mac Mini, iMac, Macbook pro and Macbook air
- Microsoft Windows systems such as XP, Vista, 7, 8 and Windows Mobile
- Android powered mobiles, tablets and netbooks
- Linux distributions such as multiple Ubuntu based systems (12.04 and 13.10), Linux Mint, Fedora and Red Hat

• **Guaranteeing Reliability**

The Challenge

You might have employees who travel across different time zones or people who work overnight so it is important for them to be able to access their desktop resources 24/7 securely and reliably. As many IT department helpdesks are not open 24/7, that means the employee and business productivity is lost in the event users cannot access their data and applications.

The Solution

With the cloud desktop, the service is available from anywhere in the world with an internet connection and can be accessed 24/7. The service is actively monitored and supported 24/7 by the hosting provider in secure ISO-27001 certified data centres with staff onsite 24/7 to resolve any platform level issues which may occur unexpectedly.

In addition, with users able to log support calls to the desktop helpdesk by email and over the phone 24/7, your business not only works 24/7 but is supported by a dedicated team 24/7 too, all within the hosted desktop monthly per user cost you agreed.

Data is stored on secure servers and backed up to SAN storage devices, with additional copies mirrored to alternate sites for even more resilience and security, in the event of any failures in the primary system.

Access to the Hosted Desktop can also be secured at the front end by advanced two-factor authenticated login which uses a one-time unique password being sent to a mobile device, along with your username to control access to your data and applications.

Devices can even be remotely wiped if stolen by using mobile device management software.

The datacentres themselves also have the highest levels of physical security and access control 24/7 to make sure no unauthorised access is gained into the facility which again is something only a few companies would have on their server room.

5 most prominent benefits of Hosted Desktop:

-  Reduced IT costs
-  Improved Flexibility
-  Increase productivity and scalability
-  Guaranteed reliability
-  Security

Summary

Using Hosted Virtual Desktops in your business can greatly increase productivity and provide a more flexible IT strategy with predictable costs for the company.

As technology advances, businesses need to keep up to date with the latest technology advances to stay competitive. When adopting a Hosted Desktop, your company can stay in tune with the latest tools without the need of upgrading to the latest server hardware or an in-house infrastructure requiring constant maintenance which depreciates rapidly.

Security and data protection have always been among the biggest challenges for IT departments

and that is not going to change. The most business and organisations can do is mitigate the risks as much as possible and the cloud enables this incredibly well.

Businesses both large and small along with many other organisations have trusted HVD solutions and as the popularity of Hosted Desktop grows, it proves to be a great answer to the challenges your business might be facing.

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