



Connect with Experts

In this edition of Connect with Experts, Cisco's Bob Fosina and PC Connection's Tony D'Ancona discuss the challenges of desktop virtualization and how Cisco UCS with Intel® Xeon® processors are helping organizations overcome those challenges. Bob Fosina is Partner for Development Management for UCS at Cisco. He shares how Cisco's architecture is helping IT managers simplify management, scale virtual desktops, and expand their virtual infrastructure. Tony D'Ancona is Vice President of Professional Services for PC Connection, Inc. He explains the best ways to get your virtualization initiative going—with help from the PC Connection family of companies.



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TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT VDI

Cisco UCS Can Overcome the Challenges of Desktop Virtualization

Q: WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF DESKTOP VIRTUALIZATION WITH UCS?



A: [Fosina] Desktop virtualization has been out on the streets for a while, but with the rise of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, virtualization has become more pervasive in the IT market. IT departments have had some challenges trying to figure out how best to manage growth in and around virtualization. Cisco's unified computing system really was built with virtualization in mind. And whether it was server virtualization or desktop virtualization, what it really came down to was having a modular approach, as that makes it easier to expand in the future, as you need to. Cisco's architecture will allow you to grow easily and seamlessly without fear of making mistakes.



A: [D'Ancona] It's about moving control to the data center, so you can easily deal with security, especially in your remote locations, and more efficiently manage those difficult images by hardware type.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME COMMON CHALLENGES WHEN IT COMES TO DESKTOP VIRTUALIZATION? HOW IS CISCO HELPING ORGANIZATIONS OVERCOME THOSE CHALLENGES?

A: [Fosina] One of the biggest challenges is the high acquisition costs, which typically occur because, in a production environment, you need the ability to move parts around if something goes wrong. Often, most organizations over-engineer because of the way budgets are done, which causes the costs not to match the actual need, and then it doesn't look good from an ROI perspective. Other challenges include system complexity and management issues.

What Cisco is really saying with its architecture is that what you really need is good enough. Cisco's technology developed architecturally so that applications do not need to depend on the underlying hardware components. If you switch to a new system with a different type of CPU, with Cisco's architecture, everything will still run properly.

A: [D'Ancona] There are some exciting things that have come out with VMware's Horizon View product. Things like persona management, application virtualization, the ability to create a stateless desktop can happen on any device now. Persona management is that ability to extract the user profile information out of the system image, which makes replication and moving the desktop from place to place very easy.

Q: DO YOU HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF A CUSTOMER BENEFITING FROM THESE ADVANCEMENTS IN DESKTOP VIRTUALIZATION?

A: [Fosina] We have a great example. One of our customers was a large school, and they were adding buildings to their campus, and right from the beginning they went with virtual desktops instead of physical. They wanted to quickly provision labs and desktops for different environments and for the convenience of allowing students to connect with their own devices—that was very easily realized in a VDI environment, thanks to new technologies in VMware View that allow for easy expandability.

Q: HOW ARE THE COMBINED STRENGTHS OF CISCO'S UCS AND VMWARE'S HORIZON VIEW ADDRESSING SOME OF THOSE CHALLENGES THAT YOU MENTIONED?

A: [Fosina] VMware Horizon View is the desktop virtualization foundation of Cisco's desktop virtualization architectures. It enables IT departments to simultaneously deliver flexible user computing and offers high levels of desktop data security, which is key. The integration between Cisco and VMware also simplifies the physical and virtual infrastructure and management associated with the desktop deployments.

Q: HOW IS CISCO HELPING IT DEPARTMENTS DEVELOP THE APPROPRIATE INFRASTRUCTURE TO MAKE THEIR VDI INITIATIVES SUCCESSFUL?

A: [Fosina] Cisco is not about the products as much as they're about architectures. An architectural approach allows for a modular approach, which offers flexibility in an unpredictable environment. What Cisco has done is create validated designs with VMware View, which lets you create an environment that is cost-effective, scalable, and easy to manage.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE FIRST STEPS ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD TAKE TO GET STARTED WITH A VDI PROJECT?

A: [D'Ancona] There are two really important things to do. One is to assess their current environments and really find out things like how their physical PCs are operating, how many users are actually on at a particular time, and what types of applications are being used. The next thing is to get started with a proof of concept (POC), to find out how this new technology will work in their environments. That's where you want to start, with an assessment and then a PoC.

Q: WHAT DOES THE PROOF OF CONCEPT INVOLVE?

A: [D'Ancona] At PC Connection, we start with acceptance criteria, which is a list of all things the customer would like to prove in their PoC. Then we have a great proof of concept appliance that we've developed that we can send to our customers. They get to use that for 45 days, and within an hour of turning that appliance on they have everything they need to get that VDI working—the server, lots of memory, and network switches. We spend two to three days at the customer site not worrying about the infrastructure but teaching them how to accomplish everything that they said they wanted to prove. And what they get out of that is a report at the end of each week that shows them what really happened in their infrastructure as they tested out all this technology. That gives us the beginnings of what we need to architecturally design a proper implementation for that customer.



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