

The desktop is dead

By Pierre du Plessis, Datacentrix next generation services advisor

Public, private and hybrid clouds, software as a service, business service management, application streaming, virtualisation, virtual desktop infrastructure, automated provisioning and service catalogue – not only is the hype deafening, but the list of acronyms and buzzwords is growing by the day.

Now add smartphones, which for the first time in history have shipped more units than desktops, laptops and thin clients combined this year, as well as tablets, like the Apple iPad, Samsung Galaxy and RIM's Blackberry Playbook, to the mix, and you will soon realise why the title is relevant.

But, do enterprises really realise what the impact of this is? Many users walk around with smartphones, tablets and laptops, all connected to enterprise back office systems, which means that Active Directory, Exchange and the internet proxy server all work three times harder. They also consume more bandwidth, support (well not really, as power users tend to help themselves) and other scarce enterprise resources. So, the question companies need to ask themselves is, did we factor all of this in when cloud and device mobility was sold to us?

So, what does this mean to us mere mortals who consume enterprise applications and services on our traditional 7-9K desktops and 15K laptops? The golden age of power at the fingertips of the distributed end user device is gone. Why do we need super-fast processors, lots of RAM, our own little quagmire of operating system, anti-virus, productivity software and a plethora of utilities like Adobe's Acrobat reader – all which have to be installed, patched, managed and more importantly, paid for?

Virtualisation, automated provisioning and cloud services tenets dictate that most of the applications consumed can be delivered via a browser to a thin client device, obviating 99 percent of the issues described above, and at a much lower cost.

For the mobile warriors who lug laptops around, the tablet will truly revolutionise their habits and behaviour. And, although the enterprises resisted adoption of iPads, users sneaked them in because they could easily set up and configure their own devices without the help of the IT department. A rich application store, from which users elect what they want to buy and pay for themselves is the paradigm shifter.

And who should be blamed for the wasted investment in an i7 dual quad core CPU, 4GB of DDR3 RAM, 2TB of storage and a chassis that consumes 450W of power, hooked up to a 24" LCD monitor, wireless keyboard and a laser mouse that lurks around on many desks? Certain hardware and software suppliers that seldom release updates to major chipsets, processor standards or operating systems. It all just gets too complex, like a big engine with hundreds of cogs that have to mesh before I can fully utilise my desktop.

Smartphones and tablets will destroy the current market domination of some of the larger hardware and software providers. Not only are their developers Gen X and Y, and whatever comes after that, they also release new processors and operating systems every three to six months. They open their operating systems to millions of developers who further enhance their product (Apple & Google Android are great examples).

Enterprises in turn will increasingly adopt thin client virtual desktop infrastructure, with applications hosted and managed centrally, and only a browser as the interface that has to be maintained. And this all at a price point that could be as much as 70 percent less per user. That is IT budget liberated, green and enterprise bottom line added for very little effort.

About Datacentrix:

Datacentrix is a South Africa-based black empowered company that provides full high performing and secure ICT (information and communication technology) solutions to the country's corporate and public services sectors. Its comprehensive offering ranges from the core areas of infrastructure and business

solutions, to outsourcing and other related IT services, positioning it as a strategic long term partner of choice to customers. The company listed on the JSE Securities Exchange in 1998 and operates from regional branch offices in Samrand, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban. For more information, please visit www.datacentrix.co.za

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