

Connected Office Whitepaper: "Get into the Cloud" with VIRTUAL DESKTOPS



Why move to a Virtual Desktop?

What would compel a company to make the move to virtual desktops you might ask? Well, there are many solid business reasons in fact, including:

1. Modifying or eliminating your **Hardware Lifecycle** (moving to a predictable cost model rather than irregular capital expenditures)
2. Vastly simplifying your **Software Upgrade** cycle; (ease of implementation, standardization, etc.)
3. Increased & automatic **Data Privacy & Security**;
4. **Cost-Savings** (energy usage, management cost, physical cost)
5. **Mobile Computing** - access your desktop anywhere, anytime from any device!

Let's back up a little bit though to get some perspective. One of your single largest expenses and headaches as a small- or medium-sized business (SMB) owner is business technology - both the hardware itself and the costs to keep it running smoothly. One particular frustration is your fleet of everyday desktop computers (and growing list of mobile devices such as smartphones, tablet PCs, etc). The constant need for new hardware and software upgrades makes budgeting (both in terms of time and capital expenditures) difficult to moderate. When you factor in increasing corporate concerns for security & data privacy you can see how the desktop market is ripe for change.

This is where a move to cloud computing makes perfect sense for today's SMB. With it, you can stop buying PCs, stop struggling to keep them up-to-date, secure and trouble-free. In keeping with The Utility Company's philosophy of getting more utilization from your existing technology, you can even extend the life-cycle of aging desktops you currently own by converting them to virtual desktops. The move to a virtual desktop infrastructure means a move towards flexibility, affordability and predictability in your everyday technology.

What is a "Virtual Desktop"?

When you first heard the term Virtual Desktop, you may have had futuristic visions in your head of holographic user interfaces being projected into thin air and users controlling them with swipes of their hands. Or you may have had antiquated notions of connecting to a mainframe somewhere with a 'connected box' and barely being able to run routine commands on it. While the sci-fi version hasn't become a reality for business computing (yet!), we've progressed a long way from the other vision. Today, a virtual desktop actually refers to the ability to centrally push a complete operating system & necessary applications onto a variety of devices and access them wherever, whenever, over the internet.

With a Virtual Desktop solution such as our **Connected Office Virtual Desktop** all of your major infrastructure, computing, data storage and security can be shifted to a SAS 70 Type II-certified data center. Your desktops and data storage are then hosted 'in the Cloud', so there is no possibility of a breach that would compromise your data. Once your company's desktops are hosted in the Cloud, they can be securely accessed from anywhere - home, office, hotel business center, etc. This means your employees will have remote access to their main desktop from any device, anywhere, without having to worry about the security of the device they are using to access it.

Businesses that move to a virtual solution can also be confident that they are automatically getting the most up-to-date and secure versions of business-critical applications and operating systems while freeing themselves of the monotony and difficulty of network and system upgrades. You can have the desktops you want, when and where-ever you want them. You can stop worrying about:

- your hardware needing replacement,
- your O/S and software becoming outdated,
- the need to manage, update, repair and backup all your desktops
- regulatory compliance issues in terms of data protection for you and your clients

Benefits of moving to a Virtual Desktop solution include:

Desktop Provisioning - Create and manage pools of virtual desktops in just minutes with a few simple clicks without needing to include other groups. IT administrators can define pools, create custom policies for usage and allocate pools to user groups. All pool creation and provisioning is done without requiring any knowledge or experience in dealing with the underlying infrastructure.

Device Independence - Users can leverage nearly any device to access their personal desktop. End-users can launch their desktop allows users to access from an iPad, iPhone, home PC or Blackberry. End-users can also use thin clients, with a smaller carbon footprint and near stateless characteristics, to access their desktops. Alternatively, users can extend the life of their current PCs for cloud access.

Easy Access - Users can create, activate and manage their virtual desktops without relying on a system or desktop administrator.

Desktop Flexibility - You can configure different virtual desktops for different use cases or different desktops by line of business. Options to look at when choosing a solution include performance, OS, features and remoting protocol (i.e. RDP or RGS as a remote connection protocol. RGS requires more bandwidth, but is better for multimedia usage.)

Desktop Management - Virtual Desktops look and act as part of your corporate IT environment, though they are running at a secure remote data center. This is because the desktops are connected to your corporate IT environment through a private network connection.

Secure Scalable Platform - A reputable Virtual Desktop service would be hosted in a secured and trusted world-class datacenter like ours our with Rackspace. This also means first-class monitoring, highly secure facilities and a support team of certified experts.

Backup & Disaster Recovery (BDR) - Although not available on all Virtual Desktop solutions, with The Utility Company you can build in BDR solutions to your infrastructure to automatically protect all your corporate and client data.

End-User LIVE Helpdesk Support - With CO Virtual Desktop you can give all your end-users access to certified Level 1 and Level 2 technicians who can answer any questions your employees might have, take remote support of your systems to teach them visually and even provide training on commonly used office productivity software and line of business applications.

If you already have internal IT resources, a move to virtual desktops will free them to work on strategic projects rather than tiresome end-user fixes. If you don't already have an internal IT person or team you will no longer have to call technicians in to fix problems whenever something breaks or needs updating - it will happen automatically and you'll have a LIVE helpdesk at your disposal for any of your employee questions or requests. You'll also have the comfort of knowing "THIS is the fixed amount that I am paying each month for all my IT management", nothing more.

In today's climate of ever-increasing personal data privacy, small- and medium-sized businesses are exposed to significant liability with the storage and protection of their client data. Those clients could be insurance clients, accounting clients or patients - all industries are feeling pressure (whether they are already regulated or soon to be) to have better network security.

Large companies can afford to invest in the required security and personnel to protect it effectively, but your average SMB typically does not have the same resources available to it. Without the proper budget for hardware, software, personnel and training, and when you add in protection for mobile users or multiple locations, it is next to impossible for the smaller business to properly secure themselves. Given the stacked odds against the SMB, it is only a matter of time before a breach occurs.

Moving to Virtual Desktops is the simple solution to level the playing field by giving SMBs the ability to meet these requirements in an affordable, ever-evolving solution. You can simply stop buying PCs, stop struggling to keep them up-to-date and ensure they remain secure, fast and trouble-free. Simply subscribing (moving from a CAPEX to an OPEX model) becomes a flexible but locked-down, secure IT environment that rivals the capabilities of enterprises. **So, is your business ready to "Get into the Cloud"?**

About The Utility Company

The Utility Company® is a leading provider of virtual IT service and support for businesses, delivering the required hardware, software & service for a monthly fixed fee per user.

Our Connected Office® service program provides a single point of contact to deliver and manage technology, communications & vertical line of business applications - **95% Remote; 100% Proactive.**

Customers are supported by local Utility Service Providers delivering on-site service & business-technology consulting to reduce spending and increase utilization - our Beyond Managed Services® franchise opportunity is available by prospectus only.

Learn how to make technology work for your business today at theutilitycompany.com