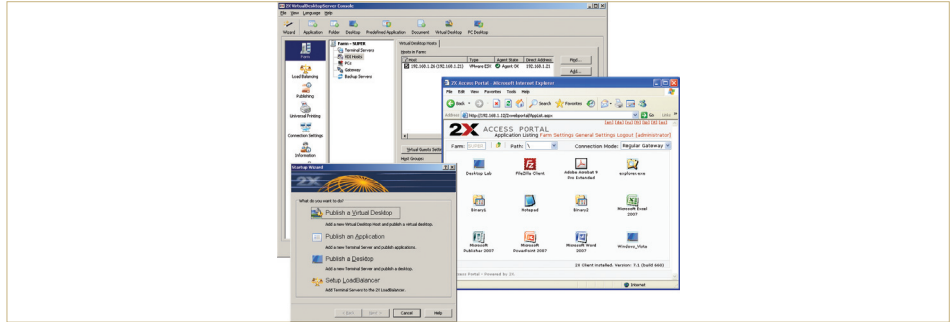


PRODUCT REVIEW

VirtualDesktopServer
7.1 from 2X

PRODUCT REVIEW PRODUCT REVIEW PRODUCT REVIEW

Presenting terminal services and virtual desktops to multiple users can help to maximise the investment in hardware and IT resources, but as the numbers grow, these systems can become unwieldy and difficult to manage. Furthermore, once users come to rely on these services, it is imperative they are delivered consistently and reliably, in order to ensure that any agreed service levels are met.

2X offers a simple yet sophisticated solution that provides centralised management of all virtual resources along with server load balancing capabilities. Its latest VirtualDesktopServer (VDS) functions as a vendor independent connection broker, maintaining lists of virtual applications and desktops, and publishing them to users for selection over secure SSL connections.

Not only does VDS support Microsoft's Terminal Services and Hyper-V, but it also works with many other virtualisation technologies including VMware, Parallels and Oracle's Virtual Iron. VDS supports all Windows Server versions and we had no problems installing it on a Windows Server 2003 R2 test system, running Terminal Services.

The main console is very intuitive and it will require minimal training to use. You start by declaring your host systems and we found that VDS automatically identified our Terminal Server systems and automatically added them

to our server farm. VDS requires an agent installed on each host and this can be done remotely by pushing it from the console.

Integrating VMware ESX Server into the VDS management environment took us a little longer, as we needed to download and import a special agent appliance which provides a link between VMware and the VDS console. This was quickly achieved though, and then we were able to add our ESX Server system as a new VDI in the console, by providing the appliance and server IP addresses.

The agent appliance allows VDS to integrate tightly with ESX Server. The console not only displays a list of all virtual guest machines, but also provides tools for remotely powering selected systems up and down, resetting them, or suspending them. All without going near the VMware Infrastructure Client console.

Users require a client utility loaded and 2X offers variants for Windows, Linux and Macintosh systems. Deploying the Windows client was a simple process and upon loading, it picked up our VDS server and offered to create a connection to it. On completion, our clients were presented with a list of applications and virtual desktops that had been published from the VDS console.

All that was left was for our users to select an application from their client console, which was fired up immediately as though it was

running locally. 2X also offers an Access Portal which allows users to connect to the VDS system via a web browser and gain swift access to permitted applications and desktops. Publishing resources is straightforward, as a wizard takes you through the entire process where you choose applications, virtual desktops and Terminal Server desktops, selecting which servers or farms should publish them, and critically, set access restrictions.

Farms bring load balancing into play and it's worth noting that this is a standard feature of VDS. As user requests come in, they are directed to the least loaded farm member and you can choose from round robin or resource based load balancing methods. Rules can also be used to direct user requests for applications to specific servers.

After just a short time in our test lab, it was clear to us that VDS can make very light work of managing large numbers of virtual desktops. We found integrating Terminal Services and VMware ESX systems into the main VDS console to be a swift process. The load balancing features are extremely valuable, and the intuitive client console required virtually no end-user training. **NC**

Product: VirtualDesktopServer 7.1

Supplier: 2X Software Ltd

Telephone: 0845 222 0425

Web site: www.2x.com

Price: One server is £810 excluding VAT