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October 14, 2011

They may say 'Imitation is a form of flattery', but what about when Imitation becomes copying? ...

As the user virtualization market continues to grow at an astonishing rate, I am aware that as new competitors enter a market, or when existing competitors enhance their positioning, some may look to what has proven successful for the established [leader](#).

Recently you will have hopefully [noticed that AppSense](#) updated our corporate branding, messaging & positioning as the world moves to a people-centric computing model. During this creation process I also took the opportunity to look back at the previous versions of our brand and messaging, and I noticed something quite interesting – we must be on to a good thing, as there are several examples of ankle-biting imitation I would like to share with you...

... You may be familiar with the (inaccurate) [comparison tables](#) and blogs published by such new or recently revamped competitive technologies, comparing their products and point solutions to the AppSense User Virtualization solution. However that is a topic for another day, what I want to focus on today in this blog post is the adoption of AppSense style branding in their go to market messaging... let me give you a few examples.


Section 1 – Use your own crayons.

We live in a creative and digital age – diversity is everywhere, everywhere apart from the graphic design and branding departments at Liquidware Labs (LWL) and RES Software...

Case 1. – Sore Throats and Lozenges

It would appear the boys at LWL spend more time creating inaccurate comparison tables and positioning their product as a second class half price alternative to AppSense instead of creating some original corporate branding. Below you will see an image showing a portion of the welcome screen in the AppSense product console.

AppSense® ENVIRONMENT MANAGER



AppSense®
ENVIRONMENT MANAGER

- Enforce policy on physical and virtual desktops
- Enable persisted user personalization
- Migrate users between OS and delivery mechanisms



AppSense®
APPLICATION MANAGER

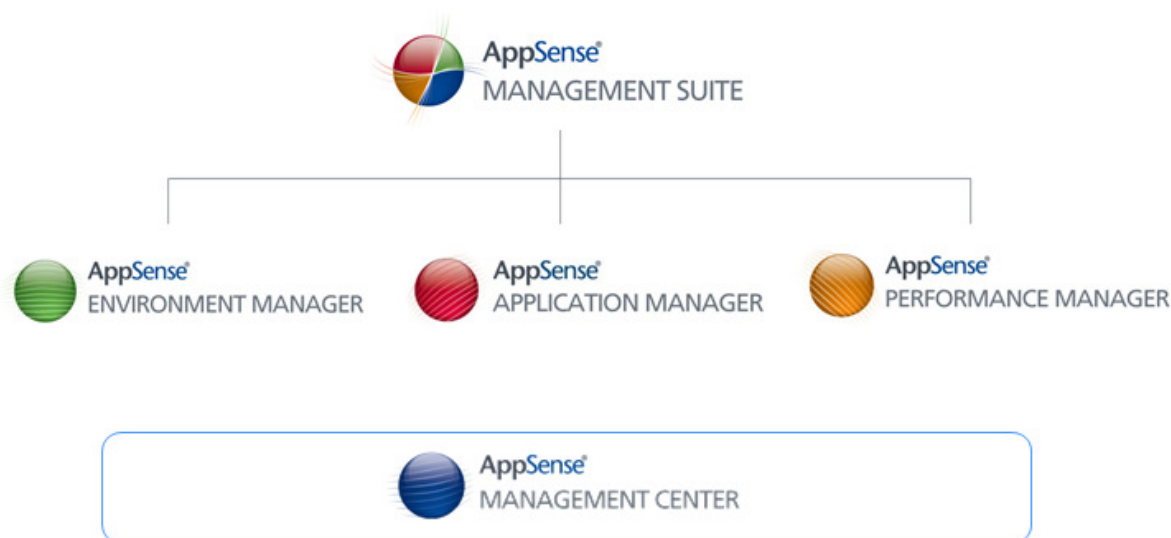
- Prevent unauthorized application use
- Ensure software licensing compliance
- Monitor application use




AppSense®
PERFORMANCE MANAGER

- Manage CPU, Memory and Disk resource
- Ensure predictable quality of service
- Improve system capacity

And below is our AppSense Management Suite offering:



I think many of you will be familiar with the above, it's been in our software for years and we have been presenting this Suite for years at industry events. So I was a little surprised, well, flattered to see our branding on the [LWL website homepage](#):

 <p>Desktop Assessment Plan, Design</p> <p>Right-size your new environment & validate POCs. Unparalleled assessment data. Plan and design your VDI or Windows 7 roll-out with real-world local and point-to-point metrics. Data that covers all infrastructure variables.</p> <p>Learn more about Stratusphere Fit</p> 	 <p>Flexible Workspace Management Migrate, Configure, Deploy</p> <p>User environment management. One profile per user for all PCs, XP/2000/Vista/Win 7. Built-in data and profile migration. Data remains compatible with Windows, Citrix, and VMware profiles.</p> <p>Learn more about ProfileUnity</p> 	 <p>User Experience Service Assurance, Diagnostics</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring of user experience values. Assures that desktops are being optimally delivered to users. Historic and real-time stats, data, and built-in alerting. Diagnose negative trends before they cause problems.</p> <p>Learn more about Stratusphere UX</p> 
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Notice the similarities to both layout and product icons? I guess the boys at LWL must have sore throats from [shouting all the incorrect statements](#) about AppSense, because wow, they really like their Lozenges.

Case 2. – Where's your head at?

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Ok, so you may be thinking that's not so much of a big deal, so what if LWL copied layout and product icons... but what about adopting a very similar image that AppSense is well known for – the virtualized user head:



Most of you will have seen the above images; it was our latest branding up until our recent uplift. Admittedly, when most of you first saw it you asked “*What is it?!*” but that’s good – it provokes thought and opens doors to conversation.

A while ago I received a LWL email newsletter, with a rather striking, and familiar image... some form of virtualized or digital user?! Surely not? First the lozenges and now the head? You can see it in the screenshot below, what do you think?

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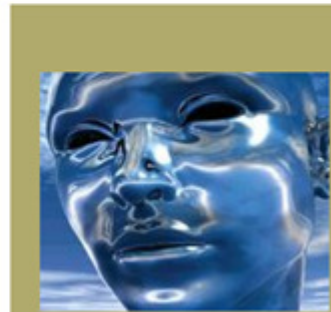
From: Liquidware Labs <[Liquidware Labs@mail.vresp.com](mailto:Liquidware_Labs@mail.vresp.com)>

Subject: ThinApp + ProfileUnity

NEW!! ProfileUnity v4.7 with Dynamic VMware ThinApp entitlement, caching, and inventory!!

Managing ThinApp has Never Been so Easy!

VMware ThinApp application virtualization frees you from the bindings of statically installed applications. The solution reduces application conflicts, enables flexibility in usage and delivery, and truly prepares you for a dynamic desktop strategy including real Windows 7 migrations.



Case 3. – Tangled in the lines

After product icons and virtual head images comes the graphics used in web pages and banners. Below is a sample of one of the old pages on the www.AppSense.com



And the below graphic is what was created for [AppSense Strata](#) in mid-2009 (what is AppSense Strata is another story – look out for a post from [Harry Labana](#) soon! ;))



The below sample was taken from the RESguru blog homepage – admittedly this blue themed banner was used prior to the recent RES rebrand to orange.. But color aside.. Looks nothing more than add a few bright particles and change the words?!

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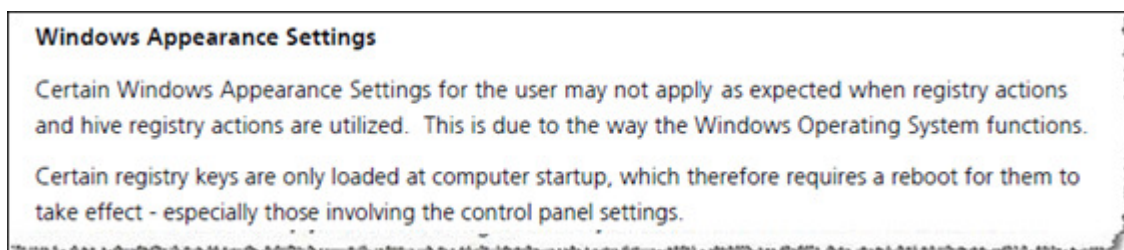
And today we have the slogan 'More Technology - Less Koolaid!' - Mr. Guru, I suggest something more fitting, 'More Copying - Less Originality!' perhaps? ;-)

Section 2 - It's only words, and words are all I have...

Messaging and branding aside, which are in fairness only references to similarities between our branding styles, the more alarming content copying comes in the form of content and wording used in Admin Guides and Job Postings:

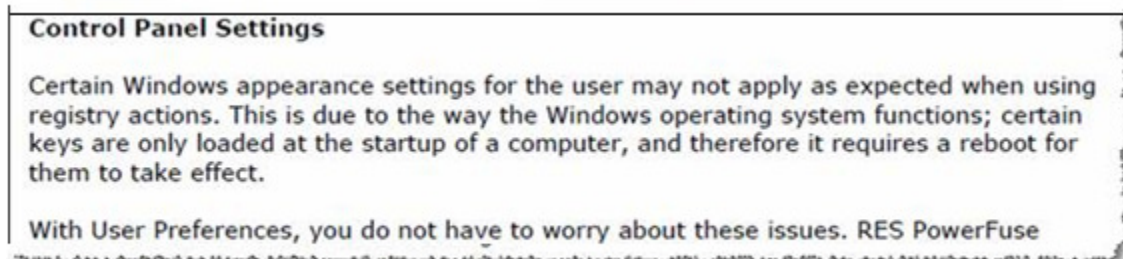
Case 1. - Administer this.

How many times have you heard or said 'RTFM'? Well, what if I were to suggest if the 'The' in RTFM was in fact '**THEIR**'?, because if you are a RES Software customer, and you want to learn about Windows Appearance and Control Panel Settings, you may as well read the AppSense Environment Manager How To document, because that is where they copied the wording from. Below is a short snippet from our document:



With the above in mind, now look at the wording in the below snippet take from a Workspace Management product document... almost word for word replication:

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I mentioned earlier that imitation is a form of flattery, but this is bare faced lazy copying, and certainly is not flattering... imitating our features 12 months later is one thing, but please – write your own admin guides for them :-)

Case 2. – If you can't beat 'em, join 'em (or at least try and attract the same people as them.)

Hands up who has ever used Copy + Paste? Everyone yes?

Ok, hands up if you have had the nerve to Copy + Paste direct from your competitors website, and then post it under the context of your company.. In full public view?! – Everyone No? – Everyone, apart from a corner cutter at RES Software.

Below is a screen shot of an old job description from AppSense.com, a standard job description we have used for years, in fact the job I first joined AppSense as almost 8 years ago.



Careers at AppSense

UK Inside Sales

Job ID:	2011-1057	Category:	Sales
Position Type:	Permanent	Location:	Daresbury, Warrington, UK

More information about this job:

Responsibilities:

It is expected that 80% of the inside-sales consultants' time will be spent in the office proactively calling new customers and some existing customers to generate new business opportunities. An element of the role will be to form relationships with our reseller channel and ensuring that all known opportunities are managed until closure. Working sales campaigns, updating sales forecast and contacts in our database go hand in hand with the role.

The remaining 20% of the inside sales consultants time will be split into the following areas:

- Monthly reporting on success and activity.
- Managing Channel Partners.
- Running reseller 'New business Development days' to generate opportunities.
- Day to day administration.
- Updating product and industry knowledge.
- Event attendance to assist with lead generation.

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Now, I noticed a few folks at RES Software had posted comments in the AppSense group on LinkedIn – no problem there, I'm all for discussions and ideas (keep it up). However from there I clicked onto the RES Software group and saw, what I can only describe as (I would say shocking, but I am not shocked, I have already seen the use of our content in their product documents) embarrassing – Advertising a job, using your competitors job description. Please see below.

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn job posting for 'Inside Sales' at RES Software in Tilburg Area, Netherlands. The job description is highlighted with a red box. The text in the box reads:

Job Description
Inside Sales Representative at RES Software
 The primary focus will be working with channel partners and direct sales representative, set up web demonstrations and work closely with channel marketing to drive new business opportunities. The role involves cold calling, following up from events, channel activity, forecasting Flow Business, running deals through sales cycle etc.

It is expected that 80% of the inside-sales time will be spent in the office proactively calling new customers and some existing customers to generate new business opportunities. An element of the role will be to form relationships with our reseller channel and ensuring that all known opportunities are managed until closure. Working sales campaigns, updating sales forecast and contacts in our database go hand in hand with the role.

The remaining 20% of the inside sales rep time will be split into the following areas:

- Monthly reporting on success and activity.
- Managing Channel Partners.
- Running reseller 'New business Development days' to generate opportunities.
- Day to day administration.
- Updating product and industry knowledge.
- Event attendance to assist with lead generation.

The rest of the screenshot shows the LinkedIn interface with navigation tabs (Home, Profile, Contacts, Groups, Jobs, Inbox, Companies, News, More), a search bar, and a 'Posted By' section featuring Linda Sweere-Ras, Manager Human Capital at RES Software.

I know it may seem only a small thing, but please, come on. That isn't cricket.

You're welcome at the table...

I am all in favor of additional vendors joining this space, the market potential is huge – the more we have, the more focus and recognition as to the importance of the user component of the desktop, the more innovation, and the more options available to end user customers – what I do object to is the recycling of AppSense created content.. if you're going to join the table... at least come with your own chips.

For now, sit back – and enjoy your favourite song guys..

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Regards

Gareth.

P:S – more to follow.

 [Leave a Comment »](#) |  [user environment management](#) |  [Permalink](#)

 Posted by Gareth Kitson

Get to User Centric IT Faster! AppSense and Centrix Partnership Accelerates Desktop Transformation

September 22, 2011

I am pleased to write that AppSense and Centrix Software today announced a strategic partnership to provide organizations with a comprehensive, user-centric transformation program. AppSense and Centrix Software have been successfully working together with joint partners on large desktop transformation projects for our enterprise customers, and are proud to formalize this partnership and methodology to benefit many more enterprise IT strategies and projects.

AppSense embraces a full partner community and eco-system comprising other leading vendor/solution providers , platform partners, reseller partners, system integrators and consultancy partners, and are very excited to partner with Centrix Software.

Why? Corporate IT strategy is at a tipping point; we have entered a period of transformation, a new generation of virtual desktops, application delivery methods and multiple accessing devices are being used by an increasingly demanding and mobile workforce, coupled with migration projects such as Windows 7 adoption has paved the way for replacing static, infrastructure based computing to that of IT as a Service, orchestrated around the user and their requirements at any point in time. AppSense and Centrix Software enables enterprise desktop transformation projects and facilitates the move to a user centric computing strategy by delivering on the requirements at each stage of the desktop life-cycle and providing

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insight and management options to seamlessly adoption new technologies such as Windows 7, Application and Desktop Virtualization, Cloud Computing and Bring Your Own Device initiatives.

The press release can be read on [AppSense News Pages here](#).

Together, AppSense and Centrix Software will be hosting a joint webinar, “Transforming the Enterprise Desktop”, on Wednesday, October 5th at 3 p.m. GMT. The webinar will be hosted by Richard Pegden, Director of Product Marketing at Centrix Software and myself. To register please visit the [webinar registration page here](#).

Like all of our partners, thank you Centrix Software for your continued support and enthusiasm, we look forward to even greater success in making the move to user centric computing a simple, low-cost process.

Gareth Kitson
Director of Product Marketing | EMEA.

1 Comment | user environment management, Microsoft, App-V, Windows 7, Desktop Virtualization, AppSense, channel partners, customers, User Virtualization, workspace management, Desktop transformation, Desktop Optimization | Tagged: Citrix, XenDesktop, user environment management, AppSense, Environment Manager, Desktop Virtualization, Windows 7 | Permalink
Posted by Gareth Kitson

Windows 7 challenge equals opportunity for IT services firms

September 20, 2011

Last week, [I touched on](#) how user virtualization can remove friction from OS migration by shifting IT teams from a point-in-time migration mindset to one where each user’s ‘digital personality’ becomes portable across any operating system or deployment method.

But just as Windows 7 migration provides an opportunity for AppSense technology to take on a more strategic role, it is also an opportunity for IT services firms to step up and provide strategic counsel on how to overcome difficulties parting ways with Windows XP.

AppSense’s Helen Major made this point in a [CRN article by Caroline Donnelly](#) today:

“Large-scale migration projects can be costly, time consuming and disruptive,” [Major] added. “Unless companies are given options that minimise these three things, we will definitely see a continued reluctance from IT managers to move off XP.”

The compelling event of XP support sunset offers IT services firms with the right mix of skills a tremendous opportunity to build a more strategic relationship with customers. Moreover, *CRN*’s Donnelly cites Microsoft numbers that peg the migration-related services opportunity at \$400m (£251m).

Resellers and service providers? This could be your finest (and most lucrative) hour, and AppSense can and should be the centerpiece of the strategy you bring to your customers.

IT pros? You’re not alone. In fact, you can find some of the most talented experts in the business

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the ranks of the [AppSense Certified Solutions Providers](#).

Doug Lane
Director of Product Marketing

[Leave a Comment »](#) | [channel partners](#), [CRN](#), [Desktop transformation](#), [User Virtualization](#), [Windows 7](#) | [Permalink](#)

[Posted by Doug Lane](#)

Building the IT team of the future

September 20, 2011

Yesterday, *Forbes* published an article by our own Harry Labana entitled “Does IT still matter?” In it, Harry highlights how the unprecedented IT transformation on the near horizon is about more than shifts in technology. Equally impacted are the legions of IT pros for whom “business as usual” will no longer cut it.

In the future that Harry sees, the most effective IT teams will be the ones that shed their low-level system administration roots and develop new, more business-focused competency bridging in-house and cloud-based resources:

This new breed of corporate IT pro will also have to be open to becoming “masher uppers”, people who can connect external and internal services to drive business solutions with sensible governance, protecting the enterprise as opposed to the command and control that represent inertia in so many IT organizations today. This would also help mitigate against the very real threat of the best talent migrating away from corporate IT to service providers.

It’s an interesting perspective. As an industry, we spend quite a bit of time articulating to customers how enterprise IT infrastructure will be transformed through developments such as virtualization, consumerization of IT, and cloud computing. Less attention is being paid to how IT skills and management priorities must be transformed as well.

[Visit Forbes.com](#) to read Harry’s full article.

Doug Lane
Director of Product Marketing

[Leave a Comment »](#) | [Desktop transformation](#) | [Permalink](#)

[Posted by Doug Lane](#)

Thinking strategically about Windows 7 will pay dividends with Windows 8

September 14, 2011

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As Windows XP [end of support](#) approaches, Windows 7 migration urgency is rising for IT teams everywhere. As the pressure mounts, there is a temptation among IT pros to kick into “brute force mode,” characterized by a desire to get the project done as quickly as possible by whatever means necessary.

As we engage with customers on Windows 7 migration projects, our first piece of advice is that a strategic approach centered around user virtualization will both accelerate the actual move to Windows 7 and realize other key benefits such as:

- Lower OS management cost through image standardization and more granular user rights management.
- Seamless roaming between native PCs and new application and desktop virtualization approaches – either as part of the migration or whenever the time is right.
- Enabling user environment portability – rather than performing a one-way migration – to establish a frictionless path to Windows 8 or whatever else comes along.

This last point has been more theoretical than practical...until today. Take a look at this quick video that my colleague Jon Wallace put together. Mere hours after the [first developer preview](#) of Windows 8 became available, you are already able to see user personalization applied on-demand as a user roams between Windows 7 and Windows 8:

Obviously, there is a fair bit of work remaining (by both us and Microsoft) before we will claim production-ready Windows 8 support. However, you can see the power that comes from decoupling the user from the underlying operating system and applications. Migration is replaced by enablement, and enablement becomes very easy.

Doug Lane
Director of Product Marketing

Update: Oh, by the way, it works between Windows XP and Windows 8 too:

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2 Comments | [Migration, user environment management, User Virtualization, Windows 7](#) | Tagged: [OS migration](#), [Windows 7](#), [Windows 8](#) | [Permalink](#)
Posted by Doug Lane

[BYOD calls for a shift to a user-centric IT mindset](#)

September 9, 2011

In an [eWeek article](#) earlier this week, Jeffrey Burt highlighted the increasing pressure that the BYOD, or Bring Your Own Device, trend is placing on enterprise IT teams. In a departure from the days of a single, uniform PC on every employee's desk, Cisco Systems research cited by Burt points to a world where by 2015 the average U.S. citizen will have a whopping **seven** network-connected devices:

The ongoing consumerization of IT has been a focal point for several years of analysts and vendors alike, who say the adoption of personal mobile devices will continue to grow. According to Cisco Systems' annual Visual Networking Index Forecast released in June, by 2015, there will be almost 15 billion network-connected devices—including smartphones, notebooks, tablets and other smart machines—more than two for every person on the planet. By 2015, the average U.S. citizen will have seven connected devices.

The scary part for IT is that devices are only one part of the equation. New devices and methods of computing bring more applications, many of which also blur the lines between work and personal life. Under traditional thinking, each combination of user, device, and applications forms another unique configuration that IT needs to manage and secure. As the number of devices and applications explode, this device-centric management mindset becomes untenable.

Don't get me wrong; there will always be a need to provide some degree of device-level patching and security. However, a better way to contend with the BYOD wave is to shift IT management and policy focus to users rather than devices. If IT can ensure a responsive, personalized experience and define context-adaptive configuration and security policies at the user level, they can worry less about which devices or deployment methods users are making use of.

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With a user-centric approach, IT can offer freedom of choice rather than roadblocks to end-users without sacrificing operational efficiency and sound IT governance.

Doug Lane

Director of Product Marketing

[Leave a Comment »](#) | [Desktop transformation, User Virtualization](#) | Tagged: [BYOD](#) | [Permalink](#)

[Posted by Doug Lane](#)

[Client hypervisors are going mainstream, but management is the real prize](#)

September 7, 2011

Microsoft made news today by confirming what many of us already suspected: Windows 8 will include a PC-optimized version of the Hyper-V hypervisor that has been part of Windows Server since 2008. This is an exciting development, as it will apply the power of modern PC platforms to support new use cases and management possibilities.

As Microsoft program manager Matthew John [noted on the *Building Windows 8* blog](#):

Hyper-V enables developers to easily maintain multiple test environments and provides a simple mechanism to quickly switch between these environments without incurring additional hardware costs. For example, we release pre-configured virtual machines containing old versions of Internet Explorer to support web developers. The IT administrator gets the additional benefit of virtual machine parity and a common management experience across Hyper-V in Windows Server and Windows Client. We also know that many of you use virtualization to try out new things without risking changes to the PC you are actively using.

While power users and IT pros will rejoice over the ability to run a multi-OS environment for testing, sandboxing, or legacy compatibility purposes, the most significant statement in my eyes is “a common management experience across Hyper-V in Windows Server and Windows Client.” While it is only teased in this initial post, management innovation is what will determine whether client hypervisor technology is a novelty or a game-changer.

The true promise of client-side virtualization has less to do with running multiple OS instances on a PC (though it’s useful in a number of situations) and more to do applying the virtualization management goodness like hardware abstraction, simplified OS deployment and patching, and simplified troubleshooting and recovery through techniques such as VM snapshots to reduce desktop management cost and complexity. So, if you think about it for a moment, Microsoft adding a client hypervisor is not the end of the story. It’s the beginning.

That said, a shift from traditional PC management techniques to more efficient approaches that use virtual machine technology cannot happen overnight. This is where Microsoft is in a unique position, as the System Center family is really the only systems management solution that effectively straddles the physical and virtual worlds. It will be interesting to see how aggressive Microsoft is in extending System Center’s virtualization management capabilities to PCs as a complement to System Center Conf **Follow**

Manager.

This point of convergence between native and virtual desktop deployment is also where AppSense achieves maximum strategic value. Microsoft's move confirms what AppSense customers are already telling us every day: there is not a single answer as to how enterprise desktops will be deployed moving forward. The enterprise computing environment has become a heterogeneous collection of technologies and deployment approaches. This heterogeneity will only grow as new computing paradigms such as tablets and cloud computing emerge and new deployment techniques such as client hypervisors move into the mainstream.

When heterogeneity reigns, AppSense reigns, as we are the “glue” that can bring disparate vendor technologies, operating systems, and deployment approaches (native or virtual) together. Client hypervisors are just one more tool in the IT toolbox.

Doug Lane
Director of Product Marketing

[Leave a Comment »](#) | [Microsoft, User Virtualization, VDI](#) | [Permalink](#)
Posted by Doug Lane

Financial Times: AppSense a ‘tech champion in the making’

September 6, 2011

AppSense is [at the top of its game](#) these days, and the mainstream business community is taking notice. In a profile entitled “[Tech champion in the making](#),” *Financial Times* highlights AppSense's early origins and recent ascent to a key leadership position in the virtualization space.

The piece also puts the spotlight on AppSense's growing prominence in the UK business community. As reporter Andrew Bounds notes:

With Autonomy, the Cambridge-based FTSE 100 company, set to be taken over by Hewlett-Packard for \$11bn, AppSense could become a new flagship of the British software industry.

As proud as we are to be a pillar of the UK technology industry, we are equally proud of our success elevating the company to a global stage through aggressive international expansion that hasn't sacrificed the high standards and unique corporate culture on which AppSense's early success was built.

As the article highlights:

AppSense is one of the few European companies that have successfully penetrated the US, which now accounts for more than half its revenues. For a software company to be successful overseas, it has to feel American, [AppSense chairman Charles Sharland] says. The management team is split between New York and Daresbury, and it is hiring a team of developers on the west coast to complement the 100 based in the UK.

Here on the inside, we feel the momentum continuing to build every day, and we see our UK pioneers and our U.S. trailblazers melding together into one powerhouse global team.

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[Leave a Comment »](#) | [AppSense, Desktop Virtualization, User Virtualization](#) | [Permalink](#)

Posted by Doug Lane

AppSense User Virtualization & Citrix XenDesktop 5.5 better together. Get your protocol fix then focus on HDX.

August 24, 2011

[Citrix XenDesktop 5.5](#) has made some significant enhancements that will help many more customers adopt desktop virtualization as they strategically rethink if their client architecture capabilities will carry their business forward. As Citrix continues to make these enhancements, a greater diversity of client architectures will emerge as customers pick the right desktop for different use cases within their enterprise resulting in a greater need for user virtualization that abstracts and enables centralized management, and on-demand delivery of the user experience across multiple client architectures.

Let's start with the continuing saga of the protocol arms race and dispel a myth right off the bat. Delivering user experience is not just about the protocol. For me it's logic 101 to understand that delivering the best user experience in a world where there are multiple delivery scenarios will require numerous techniques. This is why Citrix uses the HDX brand to describe the delivery of user experience. While it is true that in many cases the delivery of user experience will require enhancements to the core delivery protocol, that is a very one dimensional view of the user experience.

Ok ok, the cynics out there are already starting to raise their eyebrows and refusing to let go of their never ending love with the "my protocol is better than yours" arms race :-). So let's just get that out of the way. When I was Desktop CTO at Citrix, we started [project Nitro](#) which was designed to take many of the core protocol components to the next level. I'm really pleased that my former colleagues have delivered on many of those promises by providing solutions for the delivery of a rich experience for Flash, video, voice and graphics. I am sure the Citrix blogs will give a lot more detail about these, but it is significant to note IMO, that Citrix is and continues to invest in the core delivery experience. Combine this with the Citrix Receiver that is now available on more platforms than ever, and the value of centrally hosted desktops can be extended to many more consumer devices while enabling IT to maintain security centrally. For many, multimedia use cases have held back the adoption of desktop virtualization and XenDesktop 5.5 represents a significant step forward to removing those barriers.

HDX driving adoption with the sponge cake.

I hope you enjoyed your protocol fix. Now we can move on to discuss the other significant HDX update. The addition of personalization via the acquisition of RingCube as an early access release. I think this is a great move forward and much like the HDX multimedia improvements, HDX personalization will result in greater adoption of VDI for certain desktop use cases as customers continue to diversify their client architecture strategy. In particular I am really pleased that Citrix is making this available for all releases. Why do I think this is really important? It's a lot more than arguing I don't want to be forced to upgrade from one edition of XenDesktop to another. It's more about adoption across our industry.

Desktop virtualization has been around for several years now, and Windows 7 migrations are going to have to be fast tracked with Windows XP end of life being April 2014. This is a long awaited opportu **Follow**

many to finally get some investment in the desktop, however we are at a critical stage in the maturity and lifecycle of desktop virtualization. Clearly adoption is critical as we move forward and without broad successful adoption by the mainstream (beyond the early pioneers), our industry will suffer as customers lose confidence in their ability to execute on a strategic client re-architecture. Therefore, steps any desktop virtualization vendors takes to drive adoption are critical to the success of our industry which I embrace with enthusiasm.

As with any new technology architecture introduction, there is always the question as to what the impact will be on existing technologies. It's certainly a question I entertained while at Citrix when we were considering acquiring RingCube in early 2011 and again when I decided to join AppSense as CTO. It helps to first understand what RingCube is at it's most fundamental level. It's a difference disk that lets you separate your stuff from the base build. It may be tempting to confuse this with VMware linked clones technology but RingCube IMO is simpler by design and does not rely on a model of creating dependent replica VMs linked to a master VM, with per user data/persistent disks and apps delivered via application virtualization. For me this model makes sense if you are looking to replace roaming profiles, redirect My Documents data to a separate user data disk, are willing to bet on application virtualization across the board and are happy with View Composer scalability.

The RingCube technology does not require you to change your existing management tools and hence I think it is simpler to adopt for mainstream customers. I am sure many could debate many virtues of either approach but that is not the point of this blog. The salient point I want to make is that they are different approaches and could be confused if you are not careful which does not help drive adoption as confused customers only evaluate indefinitely..... I used to describe the RingCube approach as the 2 layer sponge cake – a pretty simple mental model to understand. Think of the lower layer of the sponge cake as your C: drive, the upper layer the D: drive. The C: drive is managed centrally and D: can be used to personalize your experience. This provides lots of benefits.

Firstly if the C: drive is managed centrally then it becomes possible to share the C: drive amongst many users and reduce the cost of VDI storage moving towards the vision of pooled desktops. Patching becomes easier as it's a single point of central update as opposed to trying to manage multiple distributed C: drives that overwhelm so many desktop organizations today. In fact I believe that many 1-1 implementations that leverage local storage can also take advantage of this approach. Since your existing management tools and processes can still be used, the adoption is less disruptive making it easier to get started for certain use cases. So this technology has the potential to drive a lot more IT efficiency which is goodness. Once the C: drive is patched, the personalization changes stored in the D: drive can be reapplied bringing back a consistent user experience. Since the D: drive RingCube difference disk does not require any infrastructure, scalability is not a concern, it's as scalable as the core XenDesktop infrastructure. I know first hand that this was always a big architectural concern that could cripple the viability of a solution for many customers, hence the simpler approach is prudent IMO, especially when first starting out.

Not all agree and for an alternate opinion, Ron Oglesby from Unidesk [provides for an entertaining read](#). I could go on to argue the merits and likelihood of success of a simple difference disk solution vs. a complete rethink of desktop management using multiple layers but despite what Ron thinks my position is, I am somewhat neutral since driving adoption is what I am most focused on.

Will the apps work?

What's more important with respect to disk layering technologies is customer success with application

Follow

compatibility. There's always been the question in our industry of will apps work in a layer? Will third party vendors support their application running in a layer? That has always been a barrier to adoption for any of the small innovative companies to truly get traction. So with an industry giant now making a clear statement that layers are ok, this will go a long way to legitimizing layers as an approach for certain use cases and this will further help drive adoption and spawn further innovation. This is great news for AppSense, as this reaffirms our belief that a complete user virtualization platform should include this type of component technology to enable some use cases. This is something that we have had in development for several years and at AppSense we continue to evaluate technology approaches to solve for additional use cases that enable organizations to empower their users in new ways. Watch this space!

So is personalization a silver bullet?

To answer that question it's first important to understand things at a fundamental level. We've already established that RingCube will add personalization with the addition of a D: drive or vDisk as Citrix calls it. However we need to think about that a little and understand in reality what that means. If you keep adding stuff to your D: drive guess what happens? You end up with a really big D: drive that erodes your benefits. It's like having a really big fat profile. So it's obvious that during real life implementation you need to think about how to leverage this technology to drive your solution(s). Depending on your environment you can of course say personalization to you means collapsing all your non core image apps, data, preferences into a single layer and have a simple architecture that scales. I have no issue with that, but I believe over time as things change you will need more management and greater abstraction and granular control. After all we are trying to move away from a world where the desktop was managed as a single monolithic entity.

You can achieve some of that additional abstraction via a profile management solution like Citrix UPM which is part of XenDesktop. Citrix understands that and hence why RingCube vDisk technology is not being positioned as a replacement. However that will only take you so far because there is so much more to consider when managing across multiple client architectures, more on that below. In reality what I think most people will do with the technology with it's current set of capabilities is use it for Departmental Installed Apps. Brian Madden [discussed this quite well here](#).

There are other use cases as well but simple personalization and departmental installed apps IMHO will be most pragmatic. In summary I believe the D: drive will be used to group together sets of applications for departments to help manage against bloat of the D: drive eroding TCO benefits. This also helps mitigate against application compatibility concerns because one would assume the layered apps are tested. This would still be a simple architecture that scales using your existing management infrastructure and over time more sophisticated layers management could be added and even additional nested layers. Additional abstraction to provide further flexibility and use cases such as working in non VDI use cases like XenApp will have to be provided by other means.

So when do I need user virtualization?

A lot of people confuse user virtualization and think it's just a profile feature, or it's just personalization and perhaps if you have read this far you also now know that it will include additional component technologies like layers. User Virtualization focuses on the "complete abstraction and management of the user" away from the underlying desktop and applications. It's about delivering the user experience everywhere. By the nature of our virtualization, abstraction and management, the right tool can be used for the right component. Many XenDesktop customers use this level of component abstraction to er

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new use cases to simplify the adoption of multiple client architecture such as PC, VDI, XenApp, App virtualization and laptops.

Without a sophisticated set of capabilities that enable IT to manage across these heterogeneous client architectures, one ends up with several methods to replicate functionality in multiple environments that leads to complexity. Disk differencing technology does not work across all these client architectures and also does not provide the same capabilities as user virtualization. Some of these additional user virtualization capabilities can be summarized as follows:

- Robust granular set of and application of contextual policy controls and GPO.
- Per user, per application management of the users personalization.
- Application control to enable granular execution context.
- Application licensing and metering.
- Application and user rights management to mitigate data center risk due to user actions.
- Performance management.
- Cross platform support that enables roaming between locally installed, virtualized, and published applications.
- Cross application delivery support.
- Superior controlled model for roaming between VDI and native PCs.
- Proven scalability of solution in the most demanding enterprises.
- Vendor independent approach

For over a decade customers have understood the value of user virtualization and the need will continue to grow as Windows client architecture diversity continues. Reassuringly the technical community is [beginning to see clarity](#) about the distinct differences and need for user virtualization. Even Microsoft with Windows 8 is upping their focus on enabling a user centric world that enables people with the [creation of a User-Centered Experience team](#).

It won't stop there. The post PC Era is upon us. Today we are faced with increasing complexity due to the need for greater diversity of client architectures within Windows. User virtualization will play a major part to enable that world. However IT will need to transcend that world and learn how to embrace an emerging world that through the forces of consumerization and IT as a service, will enable many more client use cases. User virtualization will need to rise to the challenge and enable us to re-imagine a whole new generation of innovation to empower users and IT that goes far beyond disk differencing which is only applicable to Windows. Competitive, pretenders that deny user virtualization and limit their vision to only the PC Era coupled with arcane patent leverage to force marketing agreements under duress will continue to lag years behind in innovation and continue to operate from a position of desperation and weakness.

AppSense achieved record growth of 54% and revenue of \$71m in FY 11. Yes [we published the numbers](#) because they are real and not rah rah statements like some....

...This record growth was not driven by the inclusion or exclusion of layers. Customers will continue to need technologies that allows them to abstract complexity, manage centrally and deliver on demand user experiences for the right use case. The addition of XenDesktop 5.5 with HDX improvements for both multimedia and the addition of a disk layer technology will drive greater adoption and is a welcome evolution in our industry. AppSense will continue to remain a strong Citrix partner driving adoption of XenDesktop with user virtualization and is committed to evolving the user virtualization platform to enable its customers to embrace the post PC Era.

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[Harry Labana](#), VP and CTO

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Posted by appsense

[Introduction and Microsoft Partner Solutions Center...](#)

August 23, 2011

Hi I am Michael Kleef, Director of Business Development for Microsoft and Citrix at AppSense. I'm a recent addition to AppSense having spent nearly 11 years at Microsoft with my last role being a Senior Technical Product Manager for depth content and knowledge in Windows Server 2008 R2 SP1 RDS and VDI.

I have had few interested messages through my email and privately over twitter (@mkleef) asking why I left Microsoft and chose to go to AppSense. Essentially I was really excited by what I saw AppSense doing; transforming the discussion from device centric computing to a world of user centric computing. The interesting thing is that even while I was at Microsoft I was seeing evidence that in addition to Microsoft, many other companies saw great value in AppSense such as inclusion with a number of major players into their reference architectures such as the HP client reference architecture and Cisco VXI. AppSense also won the Citrix Ready Partner of the Year 2010. I did my own due diligence looking at others, though in the end it made it an easy slam dunk move to go to the market leader in the user virtualization space.

Microsoft is obviously a critical partner in multiple areas for AppSense, so it's important that we are onsite on the Microsoft Redmond campus regularly. To help us support that we are part of the on campus Microsoft Partner Solutions Center (MPSC). The MPSC is a facility that showcases some of Microsoft's partners and their solutions for business and demonstration purposes. Having been there for almost a year now, we can confirm it's a great facility with tremendous value to the Microsoft partner ecosystem. We also noticed that RES Software have recently joined the MPSC. The addition of RES Software to the MPSC confirms the importance and relevancy of the user virtualization market that we pioneered which is growing significantly and presenting an exciting challenge to our product leadership.

Demonstration systems on the Microsoft campus are especially important to be able to showcase your product and how it works. I personally developed an integrated Citrix, Microsoft and AppSense demo on the Microsoft campus in Redmond many months ago. It includes Windows Server 2008 R2 SP1, Hyper-V, Windows 7 Enterprise SP1, App-V packaged applications and streamed applications such as Office 2010 all running on top of Citrix XenDesktop 5 and XenApp 6. Overlaid on top of that is AppSense User Virtualization which seamlessly manages the user as they create settings and move in real-time from their XenDesktop managed Windows 7 to a XenApp 6 session. This is available on Microsoft's corporate network which any Microsoft employee can logon to using their domain credentials making it a very good demo for them to use with existing or potential customers.

We plan to take this demo further forward and place it on the Internet for our partners to also use [Follow](#)

the power of AppSense User Virtualization really delivering value in a variety of Citrix and Microsoft technology scenarios. Watch this space for more on that!

If you have any questions about User Virtualization at the MPSC or would be interested in getting a demo from one of our team in your local area, drop me a line.

Thanks,
Michael Kleef

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