Parallels Remote Application Server vs Dell vWorkspace

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Overview

Desktop virtualization and application publishing have come a long way. At one time, there were only a couple of major players in the industry, but now there are quite a few different solutions that claim to do a lot of different things. This paper will analyze two of the solutions: Parallels® Remote Application Server (RAS) and Dell vWorkspace™.

Considering most mature products these days have similar features, this comparative document concentrates on how the features of Parallels RAS and Dell vWorkspace differ and how these differences affect the end user experience.

Installation & Getting Started

Both products have the basic next, next, finish template, so the difference between the products really comes down to the configuration after installation and how quickly you can make the applications or virtual desktops available to your users.

Once Parallels RAS is installed and the administrator has logged in to the Administrator Console for the first time, you can publish your first application or virtual desktop, even from a single server setup, and users can connect to the server to access the data immediately. The straightforward wizards make it very easy to configure and deploy your environment.

By comparison, once the vWorkspace installation wizard is ready, you have to go through a configuration process that is neither straightforward nor intuitive.

Connectivity

HTML5 is all the rage with connection broker solutions, and why not? The ease with which you can access your virtual desktop or applications makes this a must-have for any desktop or application delivery solution. HTML5 allows users to access their desktop or application through their browser, without requiring a client. This is great for kiosks and Chromebook™; it makes the solution much more flexible and viable for most companies and allows for better BYOD.

However, there are some definite drawbacks to this solution: the graphical performance is not ideal for users with more than one monitor or for those who need to do CAD work. Device redirection also does not work with the HTML5 client. This means that if you want USB redirection to your endpoint, it will not work over HTML5.

The good news, though, is that both Parallels RAS and Dell vWorkspace come with a client that you can install on your PC or a host of difference devices. While connectivity is pretty much the same between solutions, only Parallels RAS offers a more robust choice of endpoints to install to. Want to use your Linux machine? Check. Want to use a tablet or phone? Check. How about Raspberry Pi? Check. The range of options is seemingly endless with Parallels RAS.

Along with the endpoint devices, both solutions offer the security and remote capabilities to access desktops or applications from outside your LAN. Both solutions also come with the Gateway server that can encrypt the connection over SSL, and have the ability to use two-factor authentication, which is a necessity today.

High Availability / Load Balancing

High availability and load balancing options typically have to be arranged with multiple third-party solutions and vendors, as none of the major players have introduced them as out-of-the-box features. Therefore, if you want to set up load balancing or high availability for Dell vWorkspace, you need multiple products from multiple vendors, such as F5 or Kemp for load balancing, and then you need to make sure you have the hypervisor license to support high availability.

Parallels RAS, however, offers high availability and load balancing out of the box, so you don't have to research third-party solutions. Moreover, you don't have multiple vendors to deal with; you just have one support line to call.

All this is built in with Parallels RAS and covered by the initial license you buy.

Scalability

Parallels Remote Application Server allows you to remotely install all needed components when scaling up the infrastructure. This means that you can be up and running in no time. All you need to do is install the server's operating system, then install the agent from the Parallels RAS central management console, and you're good to go. New servers are automatically added to the farm and included in all load balancing rules by default, thus requiring minimum configuration.

With Dell vWorkspace, you need to manually install the agent on every new server you add after the operating system is installed, and then you have to add it to the pool of your choice. These added steps can potentially take you away from the line of business, and if you get a spike in usage or bandwidth, you need to rollout as quickly as possible. Parallels RAS allows you to do this quickly and easily.

Ease of Use

If a solution is not easy to use, then you will more than likely remove it from your environment. The process of training and getting your IT staff up to speed on the solution itself increases the TCO (total cost of ownership), and one of the time-consuming issues mentioned by customers is migrating all the users from the old system to the new application and virtual desktop solution, and giving them access to the virtual desktops and applications.

Price and Licensing

If flexible licensing is appealing, you are in luck—Parallels Remote Application Server has flexible licensing options. For example, you can inexpensively add extra licensing at any point in time. This sets Parallels RAS above the competition again, by allowing you to pay $79.99 for every concurrent user, as opposed to $300 for one concurrent user for Dell vWorkspace.

The licensing for Parallels RAS is also simple, as there is only one licensing option, every feature is included, and there are no hidden costs or surprises. Therefore, you do not have to consider whether you need to purchase Standard, Advanced or Enterprise like you would with Dell vWorkspace. Licensing headaches are a thing of the past with the one-size-fits-all licensing offered by Parallels.

In a Few Words

Parallels RAS

- Easy to set up and quicker to roll out

- Able to scale up the farm easily with remote installation of agents

- Licensing and cost is straightforward and affordable

- High availability and load balancing solutions are built in

- Clientless HTML5 access to applications and virtual desktops

- Encrypted connection between end users and Parallels farm for a more secure setup

- Support for the most popular operating systems and mobile operating systems (out-of-the-box BYOD support)

Dell vWorkspace

- No new product and feature releases from Dell; only support updates will be available

- Requires additional and complex configuration after setup

- Scaling up requires extra cost with third-party vendors

- Too many licensing options

- Much more expensive than Parallels RAS

Conclusion

When comparing Parallels Remote Application Server and Dell vWorkspace, one can't help but notice the lower total cost of ownership when using Parallels RAS. The ease of use and licensing are head and shoulders above the competition, and the out-of-the-box HALB availability is a feature offered by no other solution in the industry.

While vWorkspace does have the Dell™ brand name to boost their sales prospects, there will be no more updates for vWorkspace since Dell has announced its end of life. This means that Dell vWorkspace will only follow the support framework, and no new features will be developed. This may change if Dell sells the product, but as of now, that is a very big drawback when considering whether to purchase vWorkspace.

The range of features offered by Parallels RAS, as well as those that are still being implemented, should make Parallels Remote Application the clear choice for your business and your users.