



## XenDesktop vs VMware View - Setting the Record Straight

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VMware recently launched View 4 and is making numerous comparisons to Citrix XenDesktop 4, which has been consistently winning the praise of the media, analysts and customers alike. Unfortunately, many of these comparisons and statements are inaccurate, misleading and distracting for customers that are trying to set a desktop virtualization strategy. This document directly addresses these claims, and offers additional guidance for customers on how best to approach a thorough evaluation.

### Why choose XenDesktop 4?

In their competitive literature VMware claims that they have the only end-to-end integrated solution for delivering desktops as a managed service. This is false. VMware View 4 is narrowly focused on delivering server-hosted desktops running as virtual machines (“VDI”), bundled with an application virtualization product that can be used to place apps on those desktops.

XenDesktop 4 offers a truly complete, integrated solution that not only offers VDI but far more in order to enable desktop virtualization for all types of use cases and business requirements. It provides IT with the tools to deliver the right desktop to the right users. XenDesktop has the following capabilities that VMware View does not:

- FlexCast delivery technology – providing all types of virtual desktops
- Managed application delivery – hosted, streamed, virtualized
- Rich support for multiple client devices
- WAN acceleration
- Secure Gateway
- Profile management
- Smart Card support

These are extensive capabilities that go far beyond just VDI desktops.

## Who is the real market leader?

VMware claims that View is the market leader in VDI. At best, this is a tenuous claim without any independent market data to support it. Regardless, it is more important to remember that VDI is just one way to deliver virtual desktops, and just a portion of the larger desktop virtualization space. To understand which solution offers the most experience, maturity and functionality in centralized desktop computing, look at the rich history and hundreds of thousands of Citrix customers. If you are specifically considering VDI, then look not only at the number of licenses distributed, but also the quality of the customer references and how they are using the solution in production environments. Though VMware may have put many View licenses in customers' hands, when you examine the stories you frequently find that:

- **The customer has a very small deployment (50 – 100 users) in pilot or production**
- **The customer bought the licenses but is still evaluating it.**
- **The customer is using XenDesktop to deliver the desktops, and only purchased View to acquire ESX licenses.**

In contrast we have a number of case studies with users actually using XenDesktop in production, including customers that switched from VMware to Citrix. And many of these customers number their users in the thousands. **Customer references can be found [here](#) and include Collier County Public Schools, Campbell Union High School, Independence Bank and [Alameda County Medical Center](#).**

## Complexity & Management

VMware points to installation steps and consoles as examples of the “complexity” of XenDesktop. However, what they position as complexity is really the flexibility and feature-richness that real IT organizations need to meet a variety of enterprise requirements. XenDesktop does quite a bit more than View does, both in terms of desktop centralization and delivery, as well as application delivery, management and monitoring, security, WAN optimization and more. So while XenDesktop offers more management interfaces, it also offers far more management capabilities.

If you were to assemble all the necessary components needed to make View capable of similar functionality, this would go well beyond the capabilities of its management tool. Even configuring, updating and managing VM images must still be done manually in vCenter, not View Manager. The fact is that VMware View doesn't include features such as access policies, multiple desktop delivery methods, granular control over user experience, managed applications, and other features required for a secure, managed environment in their product. The omission of these features severely limits the product's flexibility. Also ThinApp, View Premier's application packaging utility, does not integrate with View Manager and in fact does not have a management interface. While VMware touts the lack of a management interface for ThinApp as a feature, in a real world scenario this adds its own brand of complexity, because it will require manually editing text files and designing custom scripts to complete delivery.

VMware frequently references a Tolly Group report that they commissioned in order to try to validate their claims that View is a simpler solution. Our thoughts on this highly skewed “report” can be found [here](#).

### High Performance End User Experience

The only significant new feature of View 4 is the introduction of the software version of Teradici’s hardware-based PCoIP protocol. This feature was announced over a year ago, and has been a long time in the making – and yet it comes up short on capabilities.

For example, PCoIP does not have smartcard support or ThinPrint support, nor does it support the View Connection Server. In addition, PCoIP only works with hosted VM based desktops and does not extend to hosted shared desktops (Terminal Services-based) or blade PCs. Also important to note is that VMware has shown a number of demos of software PCoIP, but they obscure how performance comes at the cost of bandwidth consumption and server resource overhead and therefore, scalability. This is critical to know for a real production deployment

By contrast, Citrix ICA and HDX technology are proven solutions that have numerous, real world references for WAN & LAN use. It is optimized for providing a high definition user experience over any type of network, and uniquely balances performance with network efficiency and server scalability.

### Who pioneered what?

VMware claims as one of their credentials that they pioneered the virtual desktop market. The reality is that when it comes to delivering Windows desktops to users, they are a newcomer. Citrix has been delivering desktops to users for over 20 years and Citrix can deliver multiple types of desktops – not just VDI. Even when narrowing down on just VDI, even a basic review of the solution shows that the underpinnings of what makes VDI possible today were innovated over a decade ago by Citrix – centralized hosting, delivery protocols, user experience technologies, and network optimizations, etc.

### Which solution is more expensive?

VMware often compares the license cost of their product, with fewer features, to a version of XenDesktop that has far more capabilities. For example, VMware will draw a comparison between View 4 Premier and XenDesktop Platinum – even though from a feature standpoint, View is more similar to XenDesktop Enterprise. To be a truly accurate comparison to XenDesktop 4, one should consider the costs of View 4, plus all the 3<sup>rd</sup> party products, as well as the additional the network and server infrastructure costs likely to be needed to manage the overhead of PCoIP.

## The infamous “5 questions”

In VMware’s sales tools, they encourage customers to ask their Citrix representative 5 questions. The simple answers are below.

***Q: How long will it take to deploy XenDesktop in my environment?***

**A:** If you follow our [Evaluator’s Guide](#), not long at all considering the extensive capabilities that are possible. However, to draw equivalent comparison to View, a much simpler environment will suffice, and this can be implemented in a very short time. For demonstrations and proof of concepts, the free Express Edition is available from [www.citrix.com/tryxendesktop](http://www.citrix.com/tryxendesktop). Citrix partners also have access to a XenDesktop Quick Proof of Concept (PoC) Kit from MyCitrix, which makes very short work of setting up a standard environment with many of the available features implemented.

To properly evaluate a similarly equipped View deployment, be sure to ask your VMware representative the following questions:

- ***How long will it take you to deploy Linked Clones?***
- ***How much time will you spend managing your clones and their growth with refreshes & recompositions?***
- ***How long will it take you to package all of your ThinApp applications, update the files with AD permissions, and write scripts to successfully deploy them?***
- ***How will VMware handle all of the AD objects that get created by the linked clones? Will they be automatically deleted or will they replicate throughout your domain?***

Our point is this – there are many factors to be considered in any evaluation. Think critically about the success criteria and metrics – the amount of time it takes to install the solution is irrelevant if it doesn’t meet all the business requirements of the solution.

***Q: How many customers are deploying ESX for the backend and why?***

**A:** Quite a few and we have customers who’ve been using vSphere as well. In many cases the customers already had it in their environments, had tried View previously, and decided to bring in Citrix in order to make the solution work. However, we have seen a rapid and steady increase in the number of customers choosing XenServer and Hyper-V for their desktop virtualization infrastructure in the past year. Some of these customers are using two multiple hypervisors all at once. At Citrix we give the customer the choice to choose what’s best for your environment – whether that means integrating with something you have, or providing the option to try the latest technology.

***Q: Which XenDesktop reference customers have deployed 1000+ seats in production? How long did it take and what is the TCO?***

**A:** You can find our customer references [here](#). [Collier County Public Schools](#) is one of our references and they originally deployed VMware’s product but switched over to XenDesktop. XenDesktop has saved customers as much as 80% in management costs

and delivers solid TCO. Another interesting case is [Campbell Union High School District](#), who is using XenDesktop for over 8,000 students and faculty and is saving \$250,000 per year. Emory Healthcare is also a reference customer and [recorded a video](#) about their solution. They are saving over 50% on management effort and \$1.5M savings annually, as well as improving patient care. There are several more stories like these. Be sure to ask your VMware representative to provide equally compelling references that are in full production use.

***Q How do you deploy and manage different types of desktops? Can they all be managed with a single management console?***

**A:** You probably have different groups of users with different requirements. Some are likely remote, some are probably in corporate, some are mobile and some might even be temps or contractors. They probably have different needs in terms of applications, control over their environments, and bandwidth requirements. XenDesktop gives you the right tools to give each set of users the right desktop environment.

To manage this enterprise-class environment, you use the XenDesktop and XenApp consoles.

Conversely, to deploy and manage the same diversity of virtual desktops in View 4 simply is not practical, as many of the features and flexibility required are not part of their solution. Ask your VMware representative:

- ***Can View support anything other than VDI desktops with PCoIP?***
- ***How well can View handle the remote users in low bandwidth situations?***
- ***Can you set security policies within View to control what resources are available based on user location?***
- ***How many third party products will I need to manage the functions that View lacks?***
- ***Can VMware consolidate all of the third party management consoles into a single interface?***

***Q: What is the cost per virtual desktop in a 1,000 user XenDesktop implementation?***

**A:** Oversimplification of the considerations in this area only leads to inaccurate information. If anybody gives you a simple answer off the top of their head they're misinformed. You need to factor in vendor licensing, Microsoft VECD, server cost, storage cost, application costs & management costs, based on the use cases appropriate for across all your users. VMware account reps often quote a price of \$150 per desktop. That number reflects the list price of their Enterprise edition and does not factor in any other costs.

***Q: Can you use either product for Windows 7 migration?***

**A:** No. Only XenDesktop has full support for Windows 7 as a guest OS and can deliver applications to Windows 7. At this time View 4 only supports Windows 7 as an “experimental” guest and ThinApp doesn’t work properly with Windows 7.

### The Citrix Bottom Line

We’ve presented facts and honest answers to respond to VMware’s assertions. VMware’s claims contain biased points backed up with minimal amounts of information. Citrix stands behind the information presented and encourages customers to validate & test the information.

Try XenDesktop.

Compare it to View 4. Test it over a LAN and a WAN. Measure bandwidth and desktop density. Test it with more than one user. Test XenDesktop with XenServer, Hyper-V, ESX or vSphere. Deploy Windows 7 if that’s in your plan.

Compare the power and control you have in XenDesktop compared to what you can do with View 4.