

# How to Ensure Your Virtual Desktop Initiative Succeeds

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Now is the time for virtual desktops. There are a lot of people in the industry saying that you should wait. We ask why? There are serious savings in support and energy costs to be garnered along with significant other factors that will increase agility and lower TCO. Don't wait. If you follow the advice and steps outlined below, and build a solid business case, you will be successful.

Virtual desktops are the hottest virtualization projects for 2009 and well into 2010. There are a handful of companies doing virtual desktops in one way or another, but it seems that these "early adopters" aren't sharing what has worked and what didn't. So what did they do that made them successful and how can others learn for them? We asked some folks in the industry why they think VDI projects fail. The main reasons we got back were:

- "lack of understanding what the user needs to do their job effectively"
- "trying to push a square solution into a round hole", basically trying to make the virtual desktop solution fit every user case
- "lack of business case development and marketing"

Why implement virtual desktops? Here are our top five reasons:

1. Improve client system manageability
2. Improve security
3. Cut upgrade, support, and maintenance costs (One side-note here is that even well-managed PC environments require constant maintenance and support to repair problems and keep systems in compliance with policy)
4. Eliminate application conflicts
5. Improve business continuity and disaster recovery

We can safely say that there are many reasons why you should be doing virtual desktops. So what are some of the pitfalls that have been seen in the real world?

1. Scope creep in the project implementation
2. Poorly managed expectations of results
3. Lack of support for video, multimedia, printing and profile issues, all of which can lead to,
4. User revolt (seriously, I've seen it and it isn't pretty)

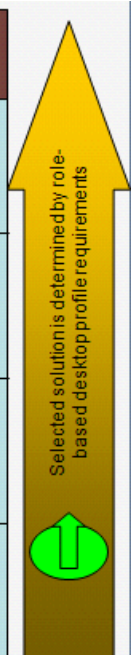
Before you start down the road of Proof-of-Concepts, Pilots, etc. you have to do some investigation first. What are some of the questions to ask of your IT organization leaders?

1. Try asking your desktop support lead how many calls and desk-side support trips result from OS or application related problems.
2. Ask your security lead about the gaps that remain to ensure that your data is secure and can be accessed only by who has authorization.
3. We all know that the business runs on applications, so the applications team lead should be in here as well don't you agree? Ask them what the characteristics of all "corporate-approved" apps, like performance, availability, and compatibility requirements are.
4. And finally, from the business perspective, ask the senior business managers about what objections and push-back the business users might raise about giving up some control over "their" workstations and laptops.

As we've stated above it's critical to get a solid handle on what your users are doing and how they work. We have been in many meetings with customers who are thinking about moving down the path to virtual desktops. Most companies don't think to put their users in tiered groups and outline what each group needs to be productive. We've been very impressed with the graphic below that was put together by a customer of industry analyst and Enterprise Strategist, Michael Keen. Michael states that "what's impressive about this is the bolded statement at the bottom '**Align the solution to the employee's need.**' Our sentiments exactly. Mr Keen also made it very clear that just categorizing your users into tiers isn't enough. You need to gather serious intelligence about what is going on at the end point and get a true understanding of your end user behaviors. You need to understand how they interact with applications, the network, storage, etc. Then you can develop a solution that aligns to them.

	DDI Solution	Current State	Est'd Future State	Hardware & Operating System Configuration	Configurability & Data Security	Desktop Capabilities
Tier 1	Mobile PC	23%	8%	Dedicated Portable PC & Dedicated Operating System	Computer Processing & Data Local to Mobile PC with Encrypted Drive – Dynamic Desktop Configuration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Standard Applications (+)</li> <li>•Unique Desktop/Applications (+)</li> <li>•Resource Intensive Apps (~)</li> <li>•Multimedia Intensive Apps (+)</li> <li>•Peripheral Support (+)</li> <li>•Mobility (+)</li> <li>•Remote Access (+)</li> </ul>
Tier 2	Rich Desktop PC or Blade Workstation	61%	10%	Dedicated Local or Centralized PC and Dedicated Operating System	Processing Local to PC or Blade Server with Data Located on Network Share – Dynamic Desktop Configuration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Standard Applications (+)</li> <li>•Unique Desktop/Applications (+)</li> <li>•Resource Intensive Apps (+)</li> <li>•Multimedia Intensive Apps (+)</li> <li>•Peripheral Support (+)</li> <li>•Mobility (-)</li> <li>•Remote Access (-)</li> </ul>
Tier 3	Dedicated Desktop-Server Based Computing	0%	7%	Thin Client Terminal, Shared Host Server & Dedicated Operating System	Computer Processing & Data Resides in Data Center – Dynamic Desktop Configuration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Standard Applications (+)</li> <li>•Unique Desktop/Applications (~)</li> <li>•Resource Intensive Apps (-)</li> <li>•Multimedia Intensive Apps (-)</li> <li>•Peripheral Support (~)</li> <li>•Mobility (-)</li> <li>•Remote Access (-)</li> </ul>
Tier 4	Shared Desktop-Server Based Computing	16%	75%	Thin Client Terminal, Shared Host Server & Shared Operating System	Computer Processing & Data Resides in Data Center – Static Desktop Configuration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Standard Applications (+)</li> <li>•Unique Desktop/Applications (-)</li> <li>•Resource Intensive Apps (-)</li> <li>•Multimedia Intensive Apps (-)</li> <li>•Peripheral Support (~)</li> <li>•Mobility (-)</li> <li>•Remote Access (-)</li> </ul>

Legend: ~: Limited Support    -: Fair Support    +: Excellent Support



**Align the solution to the employee's need**

Graphic used with permission from Scott Valeri

With an understanding of what, where, and how around your user base, focus on the marketing of this new solution. This is what we call "pull adoption". This is in stark contrast to the way most users view the way new applications and other technology changes come at them, which is typically "push adoption" by IT. By taking the time to share with users the benefits of this new computing model in terms they can understand (like cost savings to the company, ease of use, etc.) it will make life much easier for you when the full rollout begins. It then becomes "our" initiative, not "your" rollout.

The next big hurdle is the business case for virtual desktops. The top five reasons we gave above are all fine and good, but what it really comes down to is the business case you build for this initiative.

In today's perilous economic times IT budgets are being slashed. CIOs are having a tough time with changes happening continuously. More of the shrinking budget is going to maintenance and integration tasks, with little left over for innovation; but it's not time to retrench. Retrenchment will surely buy you time, but it will not buy you opportunity, growth or a future. Now is the time for virtual desktops. With some solid planning and understanding around the business and use cases you can make sure that your virtual desktop initiative is successful.

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**Martin Pladgeman** is President of [10ZiG Technology](#), a leading developer of enterprise-class thin clients.

10ZiG offers a wide range of thin client hardware including thin clients optimized for virtual desktops.

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