The Vital Role of Robust Metrics in VDI Maintenance

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Designing, implementing and maintaining a virtual desktop environment is difficult without visibility and measurement of resource metrics upon which to base image capacity and infrastructure design. Advanced analysis and methodologies provide correct data and accurate insights to ensure overall VDI success.

Established in 2000, Liquidware Labs Acceler8 partner Centrinet Corporation has pursued a policy of actively pursuing and establishing expertise in emerging technologies. Uncompromising in their mission to stay at the cutting edge of IT has not only launched a thriving cloud practice, the company has also gained a stellar reputation as a premier consultant for desktop virtualization technologies in the Southeast US.

Centrinet's executive leadership made a strategic decision early on to differentiate its offerings with the use of advanced analysis and methodologies to ensure that their experts would have the correct data and accurate insights to advance the goals of client organizations and align new technologies to those goals.

The mandate to base their IT services on a foundation of metrics and solid data became the driver of what is now a long-standing partnership between Centrinet and Liquidware Labs, according to Dario Ferreira, the company's EVP and Head of Technology.

A long-time Citrix partner and expert in RDSH delivery of applications, Centrinet was early to recognize the potential of VDI with the advent of VMware View (now Horizon) in 2008. Centrinet consultants also had deep expertise in VMware server virtualization, often working on projects where Citrix ran on VMware vSphere hosts. This background led the company's experts to realize that VDI was going to be a much more complex undertaking than any server-virtualization deployment, as they already understood the additional requirements managing of users and applications in a VDI scenario.

"Pretty much from the start, we recognized that we were going to have to find innovative purpose-built VDI tools if we wanted to maintain our standards of customer service," said Ferreira. The search for such customized software led them to Liquidware Labs Stratusphere, which provided the full range of desktop visibility across physical, virtual and RDSH desktops.

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> **Dario Ferreira**
> Executive Vice President and Head of Technology
> **Centrinet Corporation**

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"VDI requires that many, many interrelated systems and components come together in just the right way to not only make it work, but also to keep top performance over the long haul," said Ferreira. "Stratusphere provides critical metric data about our clients' physical and virtual workloads, connected networks and other systems and, most importantly, applications, so we could get a very good overall picture of how the organization deployed desktops and how they were used."

Stratusphere metrics data provided the foundation, but it took time for Centrinet experts to build on their VMware and Citrix expertise to acquire deep knowledge of building VDI architecture – organization by organization – to meet customers' needs and expectations.

According to Ferreira, successful VDI deployments are driven by an "application-first" formula that requires insight and planning at the start. "You have to figure out which applications you want to keep in the desktop image, how many desktop images you want to manage, which groups of users can have access to which applications, how you want users to access applications, and so on, "said Ferreira, adding that Centrinet consultants bring this understanding of application behaviors and user-experience requirements to every VDI project they undertake.

It was the initial success in applying Stratusphere for performing assessments that caused Centrinet leadership to look to Liquidware Labs again when they saw new trends evolving as their customers' VDI environments grew and changed over time. Because Centrinet consultants stay with customers over the growth and development of their desktop transformation projects in all facets, they quickly realized that the journey was not over once physical PCs and application workloads were assessed. This realization led to Centrinet's adoption of Stratusphere UX for health checks and performance monitoring, with strategic managed services to provide to their clients.

"What we were witnessing with our clients was that there was a lot of focus and attention at the outset of a VDI project. It's a high priority at that time to look at every nuance to fine-tune systems or uncover sub-optimal operations and make the technology work as planned," said Ferreira.

According to Ferreira, once projects were running and initial performance goals achieved, VDI projects often went into maintenance mode. "Everything

is working great, so if it's 'not broke, no need to fix it,' is typically the mindset of most organizations," said Ferreira. "But the simple truth is that time, growth and operations become factors to contend with as environments change and scale. Inevitably you have to go beyond maintaining to actively managing VDI implementations or performance begins to break down. This is true for all sizes of companies; all types of industries. We saw this happen again and again, because we were called in when they couldn't figure out what the problem was."

This development led Centrinet to design managed services for both VDI diagnostics (Health Check) and optimization to support growing VDI production environments, leveraging both the Liquidware Labs Health Check methodology and Stratusphere UX.

"Optimization is taking proactive steps to look at what is going on to prevent problems – prevent the need for diagnostics. This is a much smarter approach to take, and we have recommended to our clients to deploy Stratusphere UX into their environments for this reason," said Ferreira. "We have not found another tool that provides the level of data that is required, yet is relatively simple to set up and use."

To Centrinet, Stratusphere UX's simplicity of use of is a critical aspect in its favor and makes this tool preferable to competing products on the market. "We spent time researching all the vendor offerings to find the best tool for this purpose and Stratusphere UX came up the clear winner to pinpoint where issues lie in a VDI environment," said Ferreira. "We demonstrate to clients that Stratusphere UX will gather metrics data for some specified period and give us a snapshot of what is happening during the working state of that environment, from the applications or the virtual desktop. We show that this is not a onetime usage case – that monitoring the space should become part of your normal routine."

Centrinet not only sets up Stratusphere UX for the customers' environments, the company also provides training on how to use the solution. Once customers get a good idea of the product's capabilities, including how to gather data and interpret the results, there is a usually a good chance they will choose to adopt it as part of their normal operations.

If the customer chooses, Centrinet will stay on to support analysis of Stratusphere UX reports as an extension of ongoing services to support the IT group. Typically, this occurs because the client wants to leverage Centrinet consultants' superior knowledge and expertise with VDI systems to ensure that data results are

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interpreted correctly and that they are far in advance of anticipating any potential issues. In addition, Centrinet staffers also handle change management, that is, providing validation that a major change will not cause a disruption to services and that it is properly configured and resourced. The Centrinet team is also standing by with a contingency plan when changes are pushed live to ensure that all goes well. To date, more than 200 companies of all types, industries and sizes have opted to use Centrinet managed services based on Stratusphere UX.

Ferreira explains that Centrinet had a number of choices among vendor offerings to support delivery of managed VDI services, but Stratusphere UX had one major edge that put it far beyond the competition in CetriNet's evaluation.

"Everyone offers something different and unique. But all the environments are so complex, so we wanted to focus on a solution that didn't add even more complexity. We wanted to ensure that we could set up the tools, master them and get to use them quickly to get the results we needed. The question becomes, 'how do our people divide their time – supporting customers' complex environments or supporting complex tools?' With Liquidware Labs, we got to the data that we needed pretty quickly and could spend more of our time in productive engagements with customers."

Another major advantage was that Centrinet consultants could deploy Stratusphere UX with a high level of confidence that they could master the issue. "With Stratusphere UX, we are sure we are doing the right thing by customers. We are 100% positive that we are deploying products that don't introduce problems, headaches, etc. That way we save time and effort for both our consultants and especially for our clients, as we fast-track them to the right path."

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