

Why Select Thin Clients For The Desktop When Choosing An IT Model

Companies are constantly evaluating and re-evaluating their IT models. Having the right IT model in place can be the difference between success and failure in the marketplace. But many times, companies are faced with what appear to be conflicting wants and needs when upgrading their current IT models.

The IT “Challenge”

When evaluating IT models, users typically want things such as simplicity and ease of use, access to all their old data and applications, and higher performance. IT managers want flexibility, easy administration and management, reduced failure rates, “bulletproof” security, compatibility with future environments, and scalability. And “corporate” needs competitive advantage, increased productivity, better return on investment, and lower Total Cost of Ownership. These sometimes conflicting wants and needs create a daunting “challenge” for IT managers.

Total Cost of Ownership

Total Cost of Ownership, or TCO, is a concept used to better understand the cost drivers of deployment of a particular IT model. Sometimes only the up-front procurement costs are considered when comparing IT models. But TCO takes into account not only the procurement costs, but also the back-end and ongoing administrative, management and usage costs of IT models over their useful lifetimes. The choice of IT model can greatly impact many drivers of TCO.

Deciding On The Right IT Model To Use

There are several different IT models to choose from.

Distributed Computing Using PCs For The Desktops

One typical IT model is distributed computing, or sometimes called stand-alone computing. The server is used to interconnect and coordinate the various desktop computers, data, network resources, etc. On the user desktop, all applications are deployed, supported, and executed. All primary data is stored on the desktop, and the desktop device is a PC. Databases, print jobs, etc. travel across the network (or the Internet).

Using distributed computing with PCs has a number of pros, including the ability to display high-resolution / color graphics, access to thousands of off-the-shelf Windows applications, ability to run multiple sessions / windows, flexibility, and broad connectivity.

However, it also brings a number of cons, including higher acquisition price, costly administration, difficult to manage, lower reliability / useful life, high power consumption, and tough to secure. It also has a very high TCO. Estimates put TCO between \$6k and \$13k per year per PC.

Server-based Computing Using Text Terminals For The Desktops

Another typical IT model is server-based computing, or sometimes called server-centric, centralized, application server, etc. All applications are deployed, supported, and executed on the server, not on the user desktop. And all data is stored on the server. On the user desktop, applications are only

displayed, not executed. And the desktop device is a text terminal. Only keystrokes and screen images travel across the network (or the Internet).

Using server-based computing with text terminals has a number of pros, including low acquisition price, easy administration and management, high reliability / long useful life, low power consumption, high security, and extreme simplicity.

However, it also brings a number of cons, including no graphics display, no access to Windows applications, single session only, inflexibility, and limited connectivity.

Server-based Computing Using CLI Thin Clients For The Desktops

CLI thin clients are simple devices that are used for information display. CLI thin clients do not “run” applications, but can display any application containing graphics or text information.

Using server-based computing with CLI thin clients for the desktop device combines all the pros of server-based computing, PCs, and text terminals. The pros are the ability to display high-resolution / color graphics, access to thousands of off-the-shelf Windows applications, ability to run multiple sessions, flexibility, broad connectivity, low acquisition price, easy administration and management, high reliability / long useful life, low power consumption, high security, extreme simplicity, and above all else, very low TCO. In fact, estimates put TCO between 20% and 75% less than that of PCs.

Places Where CLI Thin Clients Fit

Thin clients are not perfect for every use. Heavy local applications, very high resolution graphics, and local drive support are examples of things that thin clients can do, but still might be better suited for PCs or some other desktop device.

However, CLI thin clients can be used in virtually any enterprise, in a number of different ways.

Industries where CLI thin clients are used include:

- Manufacturing
- Retail / wholesales trade
- Healthcare / social assistance
- Finance and insurance
- Transportation and warehousing
- Government and public administration
- Education
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting
- Accommodation and food services
- Construction
- Utilities
- Information

Devices that CLI thin clients can replace include:

- Text terminals
- Green screens
- Dumb terminals
- Windows-Based Terminals (WBTs)
- Network Computers (NCs)
- Personal Computers (PCs)

And IT environments in which CLI thin clients are used include:

- Multiple replicated sites / branch offices
- Offices with established IT standards
- Remote computing / access
- Kiosks
- Task-based applications (circulation, payroll, order entry, call center, cataloging, reservations, claims, etc.)
- Basic office automation (Word, Excel)
- Numerous desktop applications that require frequent upgrades
- Limited technical support resources
- High volume of support calls
- Upgrading from older devices
- Migrating to new IT infrastructure

CLI Thin Clients Are A Good Selection

The selection of CLI thin clients brings many benefits, including:

- Longer useful product life
- Facilitate rapid software and hardware deployment / delivery
- Reduce security risks
- Reduce user (re)training requirements
- Consume less energy
- More durable In harsh environments
- Reduce help desk demands
- Provide investment protection

CLI encourages those who are investigating the use of CLI thin clients to consider all the aspects of their chosen IT models, and just how CLI thin clients can help.

For additional information on calculating Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), download our free TCO white paper at www.computerlab.com.

For more information, visit the Computer Lab International web site at www.computerlab.com, or send email to info@computerlab.com, or call 1.800.727.5250 in the US, 1.714.572.8000 elsewhere.

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