Modernize your VDI with Omnissa Horizon

A guide for Citrix admins

Discover how Horizon helps simplify app management while delivering a better, more secure experience to end users.

Delight end users and ease the burden on IT staff

As the distributed workforce becomes the new standard, organizations are focused on building a scalable, intrinsically secure virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) that enables IT admins to efficiently provide employees with anywhere, anytime access to virtual desktops and apps.

Legacy VDI solutions, originally deployed for a predominantly in-office workforce, simply aren't up to the task—management complexity, security concerns, and high costs end up slowing down IT teams and reducing end-user productivity. What's needed is a truly modern solution that delivers an exceptional experience to employees and IT admins alike.

That's where Omnissa Horizon® can make all the difference.

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Simplify desktop virtualization with Horizon

Horizon is a truly modern platform that enables your organization to securely and efficiently deliver virtual desktops and apps from on-premises and cloud-based data centers to end users regardless of endpoint device and location. Built for simplicity and speed, it offers one-to-many provisioning and streamlined management of images, apps, profiles, and policies. In fact, IT admins can scale virtual desktops faster and provision and manage virtual apps more easily with Horizon and Omnissa App Volumes compared to Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops.

When combined with Omnissa Workspace ONE® and VMware NSX® Advanced Load Balancer™, and running on the same trusted VMware by Broadcom solutions your organization already uses, Horizon delivers end-to-end capabilities that help save time and money while increasing user productivity and decreasing the burden on IT staff.

Some examples of what Horizon can help you do

- Simplify app management without having to alter established image management procedures.
- Provision thousands of desktops at lightning speed with Instant Clones.
- Centrally manage user environments at scale with Omnissa Dynamic Environment Manager.
- Reduce risk by consolidating around a single, trusted partner.

Four key features of Horizon

Here are the key features that put Horizon head and shoulders above the competition:

1. Hybrid deployment models

Purpose-built for hybridity, Horizon enables you to manage all your workloads, whether on-premises or in the cloud, through a single pane of glass with cloud-based management services. DaaS offerings that take care of managing the Horizon infrastructure allow your IT teams to manage just the virtual desktops and apps. What's more, it's all available via a single Horizon subscription license.

2. Unique capabilities that simplify management

Horizon includes Instant Clone Technology, App Volumes with Apps on Demand, and Dynamic Environment Manager to provide a faster way to provision fully personalized and customized virtual desktops or Remote Desktop Session Host (RDSH) environments and dramatically improve app delivery and management at scale.

- **Instant Clone Technology for fast desktop and RDSH provisioning** – Included with all applicable Horizon environments, Instant Clones dramatically simplifies image management and reduces the amount of time to deploy virtual machines to just seconds per VM.

- **App Volumes and Apps on Demand for real-time application delivery** – With App Volumes, IT admins can capture the full install of an app once and deliver it to users when they log into their virtual desktops. Apps on Demand, an innovative feature of App Volumes, enables admins to deliver captured apps to any virtual desktop or published app host as users access their apps. Specifically for published apps, this on-demand "farm-less" model can reduce the number of published app hosts needed to support users and their apps, associated infrastructure costs, and management time.

- **Dynamic Environment Manager for contextual real-time policy and user profile management** – This advanced user environment management solution offers centralized computer, desktop, and app policy controls, along with powerful capabilities such as printer and drive mappings and privilege elevation. With no infrastructure required, it can easily be deployed at massive scale.

3. Flexible, robust security

With intrinsic security at every level, including the network, endpoint, cloud, identity, and workload, Horizon can significantly reduce the attack surface of critical systems and apps. Virtual desktops and apps have out-of-the-box security from the client to the workload, while a virtual networking portfolio and cloud native endpoint protection provide additional layers of security.

The Omnissa Unified Access Gateway protects user sessions and devices by using least-privilege capabilities to enable users to access only what they need to be productive. Integration with Horizon ensures that all connections to desktops and apps are secure, controlled, and validated with a single platform. In addition, Unified Access Gateway can leverage VMware NSX micro-segmentation to help deliver end-to-end Zero Trust security with the SASE platform.

Horizon also includes forensics to improve security of virtual sessions. For those who use nonpersistent VMs, the session information is deleted upon log-out and a new desktop is presented at the next log-in. Forensics enables IT admins to indicate which virtual machines need to be saved, making them persistent VMs that can be reviewed later. This is instrumental for organizations that suspect employee misconduct or need to troubleshoot issues that end users are experiencing in their virtual session.

4. Best-in-class end-user experience

Horizon leverages the Omnissa Horizon® Blast Protocol to ensure high-quality user experiences under varying network conditions, including high latency, enabling seamless access from any device. This protocol adeptly handles demanding graphical workloads, optimizing the delivery of virtual desktops and apps.

Further enhancing user experiences, Omnissa Workspace ONE integrates DEX capabilities into Horizon deployments. Experience Management, powered by Workspace ONE Intelligence, allows IT to proactively monitor, analyze, and manage device and app performance and user sentiment. Through data science, this setup aids in incident prediction and resolution, supporting both automated and manual remediation methods like real-time support and self-service options to maintain consistent high-quality experiences.

Scale VDI virtual desktops more quickly

75.9% less time to scale from 50 to 100 VMs

Deploy applications to virtual desktops more easily

13 fewer tasks for VDI admins to complete

Source: Principled Technologies. "Scale virtual desktops faster and provision virtual apps more easily with VMware Horizon and VMware App Volumes." (Report commissioned by VMware.) August 2022. (Revised)

How Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops maps to Horizon

While the components within desktop virtualization platforms are fairly similar, providers often describe them in different ways. The following chart explains how Citrix components map to the equivalent Horizon components.

	Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops	Omnissa Horizon
Remote Desktop Services	Microsoft RDSH with Citrix Virtual Delivery agent	Microsoft RDSH with Horizon agent
User portal	Storefront, Citrix Gateway Service	Omnissa Workspace ONE® Access
Administrator portal	Legacy-based MMC or HTML through Citrix Cloud	HTML-based
License servers	Citrix License Server	None
Session handling and load management	Citrix Delivery Controllers	Omnissa Horizon Connection Servers
Database server	Site configuration database	Optional
Automated provisioning	MCS or PVS	Instant Clones
User environment manager	Workspace Environment Manager	Dynamic Environment Manager
Real-time app delivery	Citrix App Layering	App Volumes
SSO and app catalog	Citrix Unified Gateway	Workspace ONE Access
Clients and protocols	Citrix Workspace App with HDX or HTML5 browser	Horizon Client with Omnissa Horizon® Blast Extreme or PCoIP or HTML5 browser

Figure 1: Comparison chart showing Citrix components and their Horizon equivalents.

Remote Desktop services

With Horizon, Blast Extreme and PCoIP are tightly integrated into Remote Desktop Services using Microsoft APIs.

User portal

The Horizon user portal is an identity-driven app and desktop catalog provided by Workspace ONE that supports Horizon virtual desktops, Horizon published apps and shared desktops, and SaaS apps.

Administrator portal

Whereas management and administration of Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops is performed using a legacy Microsoft Management Console (MMC) application or a web-based administration console through Citrix Cloud, the Horizon administration console is web-based. The Horizon Administrator console provides the ability to manage virtual desktops, RDSH servers, and published apps and desktops, all from a single console.

License server

Unlike Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops, Horizon does not require use of a license server.

Session handling and load management

In Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops, the Citrix Delivery Controllers perform session handling and load management. In Horizon, the Omnissa Horizon® Connection Servers perform session handling and load management, while Horizon provides a flexible and granular method to load-balance RDSH servers.

Database server

As with the license server, Horizon does not require a database server to support published apps and shared desktops. Citrix requires administrators to deploy and maintain database servers to support published applications and shared desktops.

Automated provisioning

While Citrix and Horizon have automated deployment systems, Instant Clone Technology provides additional benefits such as rapid deployment of desktops in fewer steps. Because Instant Clone Technology is built into VMware vSphere®, no extra components are required, which reduces deployment complexity.

Dynamic environment management

Dynamic Environment Manager offers complete user personalization, including drive mappings, shortcuts, printer mappings, and customization across sessions and devices. Dynamic Environment Manager can be used for virtual and physical desktops as well as RDSH environments. Citrix Workspace Environment Management Service applies users' personal settings to virtual desktops and applications, regardless of location and endpoint device complexity.

Real-time app delivery

In Horizon and Omnissa Horizon® Apps, App Volumes provides real-time app delivery with app lifecycle management in virtual desktop and published app environments. App Volumes can be assigned per user and per machine, and it supports physical desktops as well.

Single sign-on and app catalog

In Horizon, Workspace ONE Access provides contextual access and a unified enterprise app store with single sign-on across Windows, web, and native mobile applications. The Unified Access Gateway component is used to deliver secure connectivity to apps and desktops. Citrix ADC Unified Gateway provides contextual access and single sign-on to web, VDI, and mobile applications.

It's never been easier to upgrade to Horizon

The Citrix Safe Passage program is designed to make upgrading to Horizon as easy and risk-free as possible. Citrix customers are eligible for price incentives, financing options, and funded proof-of-concepts (POCs), pilots and deployments with leading reseller and services partners. To learn more, visit **omnissa.com/horizon-8**.

Helpful resources

Horizon resources
All of the Horizon resources are at your fingertips.

Horizon activity path
Learn about deploying and running Horizon.

Knowledge base
Search this expansive library by product, topic, and more.

Quick-start tutorial for Horizon
Create and optimize a proof-of-concept environment.

Workspace ONE and Horizon reference architecture
Get a framework that provides guidance on the architecture, design considerations, and deployment of Workspace ONE and Horizon solutions.

Horizon support center
Find the correct level of support from developer assistance to a comprehensive customer success offering.

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