



RAS Solution Guide | Parallels Remote Application Server

IT Infrastructure Solution Guide for Retailers

Who Is This Guide Intended For?

This guide is designed for professionals who manage the IT infrastructure at a retail business, particularly IT administrators who need an application and desktop delivery solution to improve the quality of service and the store's efficiency while reducing technology-related overhead, inconveniences, and failures.

Today's application and desktop delivery solutions do not only need to be easy to work with, but must also allow employees to access line-of-business software applications from their mobile devices. Furthermore, they need to enable employees to provide a better customer experience and more effectively accomplish various business tasks.

Why Should Retailers Invest in an Application Delivery Solution?

Application and desktop delivery solutions give retail IT administrators the ability to more efficiently manage the business database, including applications and hosted desktops, through a central control console. At the same time, store employees have expanded access to corporate resources, including applications and information. When retailers use an application and VDI desktop delivery solution, employees are able to provide assistance and advice to customers by accessing data on the spot. Here are some of the benefits for retail businesses that invest in a virtualization IT solution:

Mobile-enabled Customer Satisfaction

Modern technology provides store associates with mobile access to line-of-business applications so they have all the information needed at their fingertips. As a result, when an in-store customer asks for information or specifications about a product, employees can easily check on their mobile device and respond promptly to the customer.

Improved Customer Data Security

To succeed in today's competitive retail world, retailers generally collect their prospects' contact information, such as email and home addresses, phone numbers, etc. The same happens during a purchase, where the retailer handles data such as credit card numbers and names. However, storing this data can create a security risk when employee devices are connected to the network, or if information can be accessed from the Internet. If retail IT departments implement an application and desktop delivery solution, they can store and set controls on all the data in a central and secure location on the network server, where a strong security protocol will make it less vulnerable to attack and fraud.

Ability to Provide an Easy-to-Use System

While nearly all store associates can perform their sales-related work, technology may not be their forte. An employee's lack of technological know-how may cause difficulties when accessing point-of-sale software, which can result in a poor customer experience. By using an application and VDI desktop delivery solution, retail IT departments can provide employees with immediate, user-friendly access to line-of-business software. In addition, the department can lock down point-of-sales terminals.

Improved Business Operations

A current IT solution allows IT staff to set up updates when inventory in the stockroom is running low. With these updates, store managers are alerted automatically and can restock shelves at the most proactive rate possible. An application delivery solution is able to make this software available in real time, including on tablets and smartphones.

Recommended Software Solution for Retailers

Parallels Remote Application Server

Parallels® Remote Application Server (RAS) is an industry-leading solution for virtual application and desktop delivery. This cloud-ready product supports deployment through Microsoft Azure® and Amazon Web Services™. Parallels RAS offers an impressive, native-like mobile experience on iOS and Android™ devices. With minimal effort and maximum scalability, it works with Microsoft® RDS and all major hypervisors.

Following a lightning fast installation, Parallels RAS provides retailers with easy remote access to corporate applications, even custom-built legacy software, on any mobile or desktop device, anywhere. Moreover, this award-winning application delivery solution features advanced, time-saving administration tools that allow IT staff to move quickly through configuration and implementation, and will continue to make their operation more efficient as time progresses. Parallels RAS includes industry security features that will keep customer data and credit card numbers safe from malicious users, even when allowing access from remote locations. Parallels RAS is the most suitable fit for retail businesses that are looking to move beyond their legacy, high-maintenance IT system to an advanced, mobile-friendly, cloud-enabled IT solution.

Why Should Retailers Use Parallels Remote Application Server?

More Affordable Solution

Implementing Parallels RAS on retailer IT networks is straightforward and effortless. Not only is Parallels RAS licensing a fraction of the cost of other software packages on the market, retailers don't have to worry about breaking the budget when moving to a Parallels application and desktop delivery solution.

With Parallels RAS, the IT department will be able to save on hardware costs by using existing infrastructure more efficiently. Furthermore, the retail IT department can avoid or delay the PC hardware refresh, allowing staff to use the latest applications even on workstations that do not have the prerequisite OS to run them. For instance, if employees have a computer running an outdated OS such as XP on the retail IT network, Parallels RAS securely delivers high-performance applications and the latest Windows® 10 OS on that machine. This means the retailer's IT department can use inexpensive, outdated hardware on older computers for longer periods of time—while still gaining access to the most recent OS and applications.

Sail Through Configuration

Technical teams will not have to spend days planning the IT infrastructure or reading through a stack of user manuals to start running Parallels RAS. The wizard-driven UI allows IT staff to set up a private cloud, application, and virtual desktop solution in a few days. Not only that, but this ready-to-run virtual desktop infrastructure package is auto-configured with powerful tools that will save time going forward.

Business Continuity

Parallels RAS distributes application request traffic among several servers hosting the same application content. Balancing application requests across multiple servers prevents single points of failure, supports the organization to achieve business continuity, and improves overall application uptime and responsiveness. In addition, IT staff can easily add extra gateways, publishing agents, and backup servers to provide redundancy and ensure a robust network while using Parallels RAS.

Improve the Security of the IT Infrastructure

Security plays a major role in the retail business, mainly because businesses handle money and confidential customer data such as credit card numbers and contact details. With Parallels RAS, IT staff can improve the security of the business IT infrastructure. By setting up a private cloud, all of the information is stored in a central location, therefore preventing any of the data from the electronic terminals from being copied or stolen.

Set Up Filtering Rules to Control What Is Accessed

When using a private cloud, retail IT departments only have to take care of one access point where all users access the data. The Parallels RAS filtering rules allow IT staff to easily configure who can access which application and at what time. With highly granular settings, give each user only the access they need to carry out their responsibilities.

Encrypt All Communication

When using Parallels RAS, IT staff can easily configure encryption so that all of the communication between the end terminals in shops, stores, and offices is encrypted with SSL certificates. This prevents man-in-the-middle attacks and data leaks from malicious users or competitors. These encryption capabilities are part of the standard license, with no additional fees.

Reduce Hardware Costs

Use the desktop replacement features in Parallels RAS to remove the risk of Windows XP desktop computers from the network at a fraction of the cost of updating the OS and replacing the hardware. With Parallels RAS, IT administrators can convert PCs running XP up to Windows 10 into kiosk devices using thin-client-like operating systems. The desktop replacement features require fewer resources than upgrading to a new fully blown operating system, so IT staff can prolong the life of old computers and limit purchases of new hardware or upgrades.

Virtualize Line-of-business Software

Retail businesses are likely to use line-of-business (LOB) software with very specific requirements in terms of OS and hardware. With Parallels RAS, retailers can virtualize LOB software onto a cloud, where the IT department can publish it. At that point, it will then be available to all employees who have remote access capability from their mobile devices. Moreover, by providing brilliant, native controls across any desktop or device on the retail IT network, employees will be able to easily manipulate LOB applications wherever they are—even when they're not in the store.

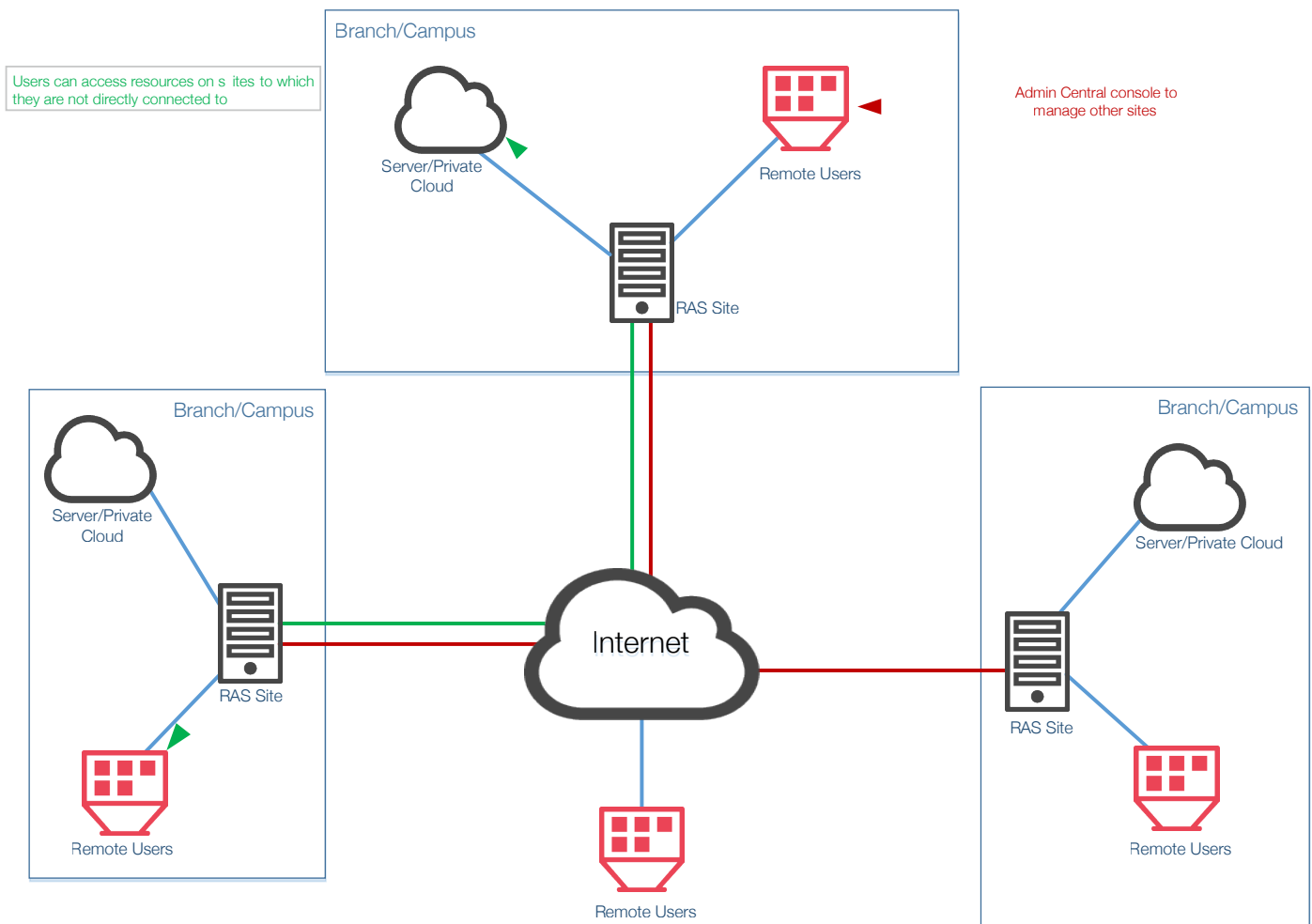
Out-of-the-box Support for Mobile Devices

Retailers want their store employees to respond to customers' questions promptly and to be able to access the line-of-business software anytime. With Parallels RAS, once the IT department virtualizes desktops and applications, the staff can access all of the resources from any type of modern device they choose. Furthermore, the configuration is straightforward and does not require setting up additional roles in separate locations on the network. The central console, which is ready in the out-of-the-box installation, will provide all the tools necessary for supporting mobile devices connected to the remote network.

Recommended Implementation & Features for Retailers

Establish a Parallels RAS Multisite Setup

When setting up a new network infrastructure, IT administrators want to start by centralizing all the data and ensuring tasks are easy to delegate. Install the Parallels RAS farm in a central location, and set up a Parallels RAS client site at each of the retailer's outlets, warehouses, and administrative buildings. The multisite setup and the ability to granularly configure different privileges for various administrators will allow IT executives to easily set up a large IT infrastructure, delegate tasks, and centrally manage the infrastructure from a single, easy-to-use management console.



Use Desktop Replacement Features

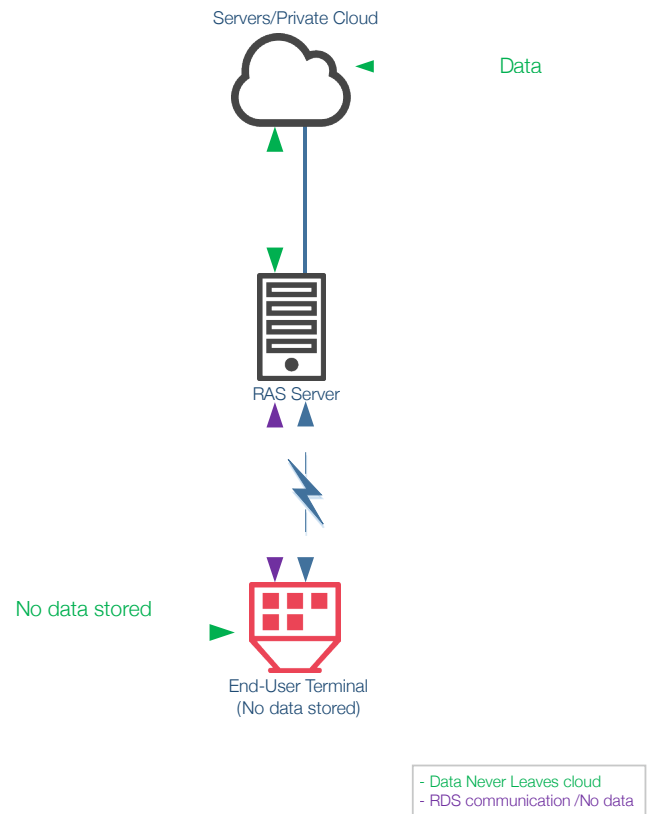
Use the desktop replacement features in Parallels RAS to convert every Windows computer into a thin-client-like terminal. By doing so, IT administrators not only extend the hardware's lifetime, but they also ensure that no data is stored on client devices or in the stores. This improves the overall handling and security of confidential and sensitive business data. The IT staff also ensures that sales associates can efficiently perform their jobs by providing them with an easy-to-use operating system.

Typical Network Setup



VS

RAS/Private Cloud Setup

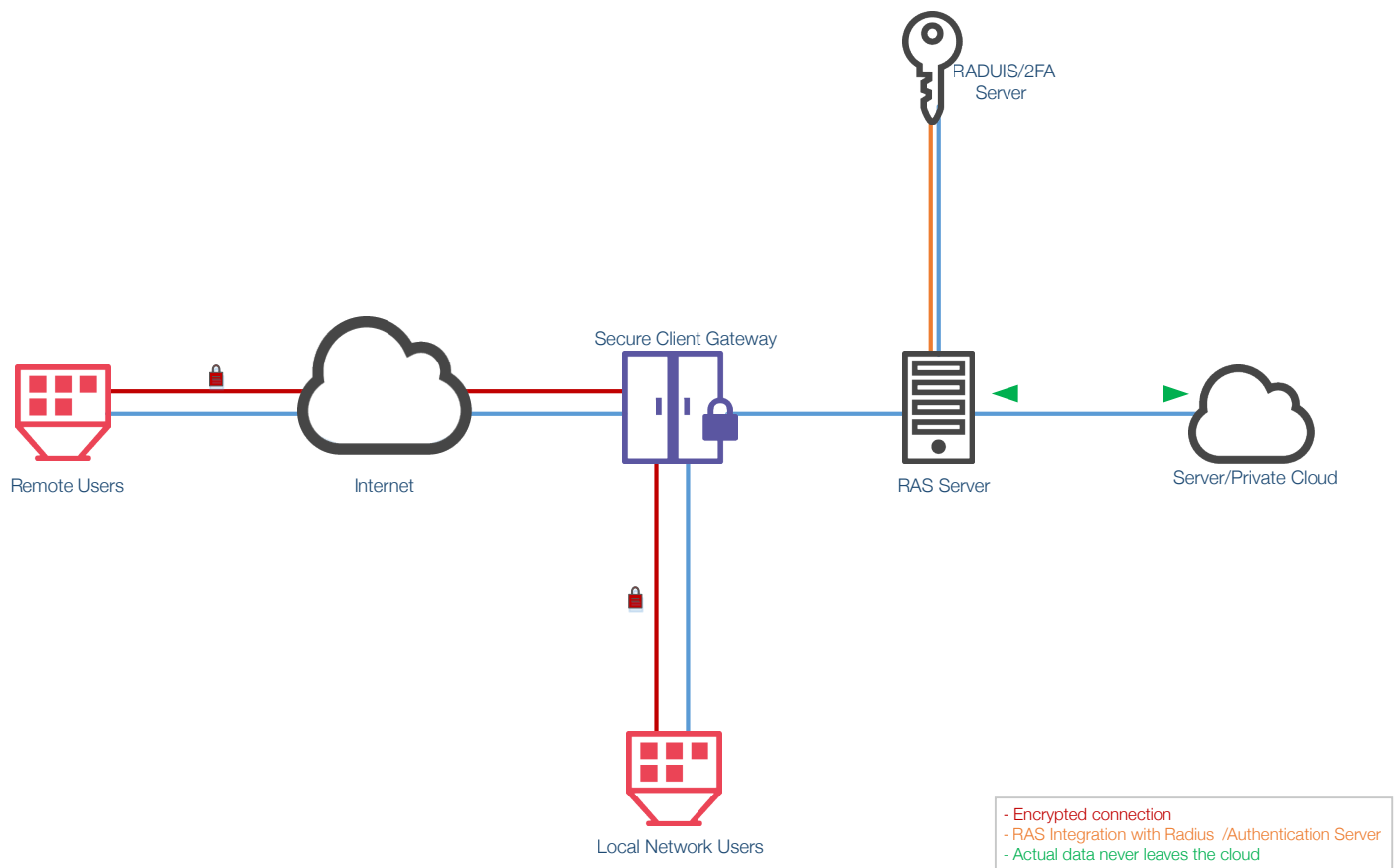


Allow Self-service with the Desktop Replacement Features

IT staff can also use the desktop replacement features to set up in-store terminals where customers can, for example, browse the catalogue or place an order themselves, without having to wait for assistance. This retailing model has proven very successful in stores with distributed facilities and can help the business reduce retail costs.

Encrypt All Communications to Protect All Business Data

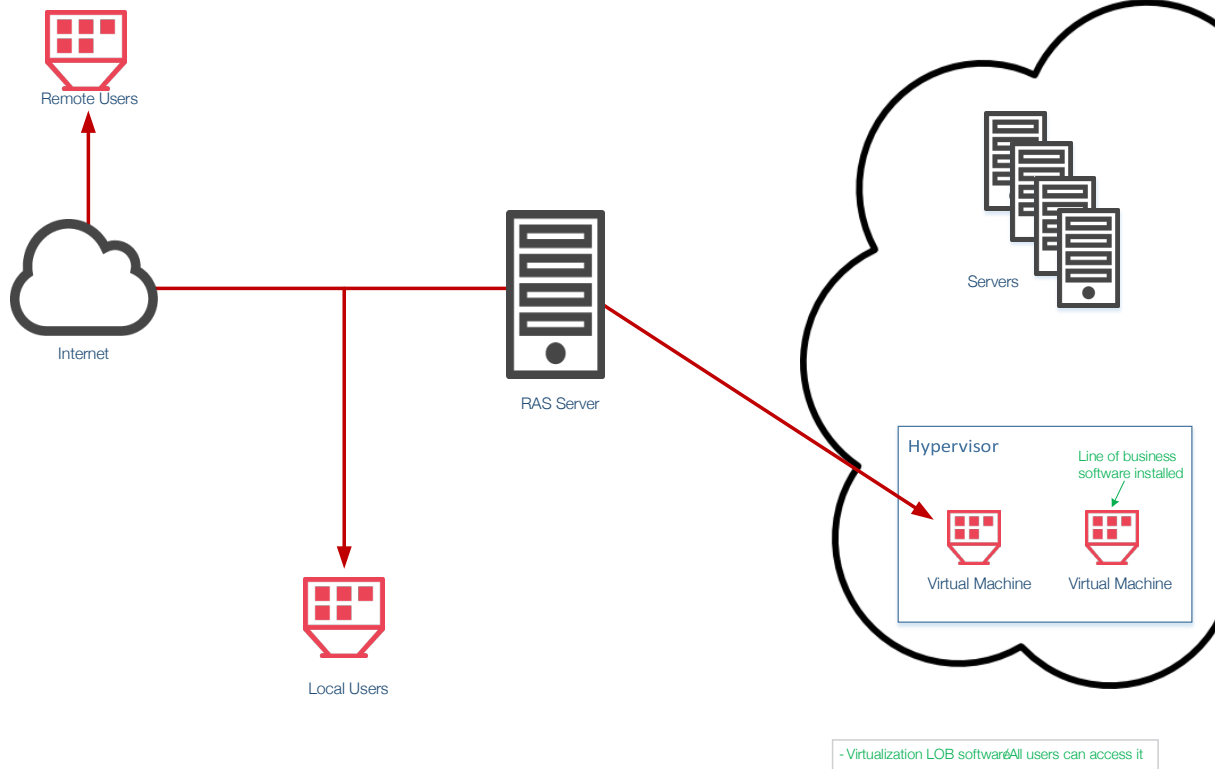
Make sure that IT administrators enable the encryption settings so that traffic between the end terminals and the private cloud is shielded from malicious users. Encrypting the data makes a man-in-the-middle attack virtually impossible, which is a strong security feature for protecting sensitive business and customer information.



Make Line-of-business Software Universally Available Over Mobile

IT administrators have the option to make LOB software available everywhere. Parallels RAS is secure and allows IT administrators to control who can access what data, and at what time. By making LOB software universally available over mobile devices, the IT department improves retail employees' productivity by providing them a system that works around them, rather than a single terminal.

Private Cloud/Servers



Make Use of the HTML5 Client

The Parallels RAS HTML5 Client allows everyone to connect and access business data via a modern HTML5 web browser such as Google Chrome™, Firefox®, or Internet Explorer®. Therefore, IT staff should set up the HTML5 Client and encourage employees to use it so they can easily connect to the business' virtual IT network whenever necessary, even if they are not on the store premises.

