



Parallels Remote Application Server vs VMware Horizon

White Paper | Parallels Remote Application Server

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Introduction

VMware Horizon® View™ is a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) management software. It requires a hypervisor solution to connect to, store and retrieve base machines and their clones (virtual desktops).

Its main use is to connect to hypervisors and use virtual machines (VMs) from the hypervisor as a base image to create virtual desktops (clones) and manage who can connect to them.

Installation, Setup and Hypervisor Support

VMware Horizon View can be installed via normal MSI on a Windows® server as long as it is part of an Active Directory (requirement). It can only be used to manage virtual desktops on VMware® products, such as VMware ESXi™ and VMware vCenter®, only. (Both vCenter and ESXi are required for VMware Horizon View)

The installation is straightforward but only provides basic functionality. If you require additional features, such as the ability to update the base machine templates so that all clones are automatically updated (for example, with Windows Update or updated software), an additional server called VMware View® Composer™ has to be installed on a standalone server VM instance. In addition, if you need users to connect over the Internet using a secure port (like RAS Secure Gateway), an additional server called VMware Unified Access Gateway has to be installed on a standalone server instance.

Further Requirements and Manual Setup

Each of the VMware Horizon View components requires additional components, and some require manual setup.

- Composer Server requires an MS SQL database and native SQL driver installed, and a system DSN has to be manually set up.
- Persona Management server is only available with the enterprise edition of VMware Horizon View (which provides persistent, dynamic user profiles across user sessions on different desktops). It requires an MS SQL database and a File and Print Server to function.

Parallels Remote Application Server

Installing Parallels RAS and preparing the whole setup is very straightforward. Parallels RAS installation is a single MSI file, so once you are logged in to the server you can:

1. Run the installation and log in to the Parallels RAS Console.
2. Add the Terminal Servers to the site by launching the wizard in the Parallels RAS Console and specifying their IP address. The Terminal Server Agent will be installed remotely and automatically, so you do not need to log in to every Terminal Server.

Once installed, the administrator can easily add a hypervisor of choice by following a simple wizard. Parallels RAS supports a wide variety of hypervisors, allowing administrators to run a mixed environment.

Parallels RAS can be installed on both Active Directory networks and standalone machines/servers using local authentication.

Feature Comparison

Hypervisor Support

VMware Horizon View

VMware Horizon View only supports VMware hypervisors, mainly VMware vSphere, ESXi/ESX and vCenter.

Parallels RAS

Parallels RAS supports many different types of hypervisors, giving administrators a wider option of software to use. For more information on hypervisors using Parallels RAS, refer to the following link: <https://kb.parallels.com/en/124633>.

Feature Comparison

Like Parallels RAS, VMware Horizon View can connect to multiple hypervisor servers (as long as they are VMware) and manage VDIs running on multiple servers.

High Availability

Both VMware Horizon View and Parallels RAS infrastructures support multiple servers to ensure high availability.

In a VMware Horizon View network, additional servers have to be added manually, going through the same original installation procedure. Parallels RAS servers can be added remotely from an easy-to-follow wizard.

Load Balancing for TS Sessions, VDI Hosts and Desktops

An out-of-the-box installation of Parallels RAS has an enabled and preconfigured load balancer. Administrators can choose from two different load-balancing methods: resource-based or round robin.

To enable load balancing when using VMware Horizon View, administrators have to set up and manually configure a separate appliance on the hypervisor or use a third-party tool.

Microsoft RDS load balancing is very difficult to set up with VMware Horizon, as it uses scripts and distribution, making the process complicated.

Publishing Applications

VMware Horizon View can only be used to publish virtual desktops from multiple hypervisors. If you have purchased the Horizon Advanced or Horizon Enterprise editions, you can also publish applications and desktops from RDS. If you have purchased the standard Horizon edition, you cannot publish applications and desktops from RDS, although you can mitigate application publishing with VMware ThinApp® package delivery.

Parallels RAS has one package that allows you to publish from both desktops and applications, from all VMs running on all supported hypervisors, including RDS. Applications can be accessed over SSL without requiring any additional components.

Keeping Virtual Desktops Up to Date

In Parallels RAS, administrators can apply security patches and update the software on the base image, and newly generated clones will be automatically updated.

In a standard VMware Horizon View installation, administrators have to manually update every virtual desktop—or create new base images and recreate and reconfigure all the cloning rules. Alternatively, they can purchase an additional component, Composer Server, to allow them to automatically update all clones.

Wider Variety of Virtual Desktops

Both Parallels RAS and VMware Horizon View can generate clones from Windows 7, 8 and 10 operating systems. Administrators can also use Parallels RAS to generate virtual desktops from Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 and Windows 10. If the hypervisor is Parallels RAS, you can create guest clones of a server-based operating system with Parallels RAS.

Security

Both VMware Horizon View and Parallels RAS can be integrated with two-factor authentication servers for improved security and protection of published resources.

Ease of Use and Centralization

Setting up VMware Horizon View can be difficult and lengthy because of the list of requirements and additional components that installation requires.

The setup of virtual desktops can also be complicated and lengthy. The administrator has to make a snapshot of the master image on the hypervisor. Then, from the VMware Horizon View configuration console, they have to configure the VDI's options via a lengthy wizard.

To configure clones on Parallels RAS, administrators easily use a centralized location (the Parallels RAS Console) for configuring clones following a three-step wizard.

User Access: Accessing Published Resources and Virtual Desktops

Users can use native clients or the HTML5 portal on both Parallels RAS and VMware Horizon View to access published portals. However, The HTML5 portal is available in an out-of-the-box installation of Parallels RAS. To enable the HTML5 portal on VMware Horizon View, administrators must install and configure an additional plugin called VMware Horizon View HTML Access.

Pricing

Parallels RAS pricing is simple. The amount you pay is based on the number of users, and all features are included in the price.

VMware Horizon View licensing and pricing is complicated. You must decide which edition to use (including different features) and prices start from \$150 per connection.

Complete Virtualization and Cost-Cutting Solution

VMware Horizon View is only a VDI management solution for VMware hypervisors.

On the other hand, Parallels RAS is a complete desktop virtualization and application delivery solution that allows administrators to publish desktops, applications and virtual desktops from a wide variety of servers and hypervisors. Parallels RAS also offers a Replace Desktop feature. It replaces the desktop of the client machine with a thin client-like OS, without replacing the client's actual OS. This feature is very simple to implement. Once enabled, the client's device is restarted, and the OS is replaced with a fully functional thin client OS.

When using Parallels RAS, administrators have both a complete desktop virtualization and application delivery solution, with a user and client management solution.

Unique VMware Horizon View Features

Windows Firewall: Upon installing a VMware Horizon view component, the installation asks if it can automatically configure the firewall to allow all required connections. (This is easy to set up).

Web-Based Configuration: VMware Horizon View configuration is web-based and can easily be accessed from everywhere. Note: To emulate the same behavior, the Parallels RAS Console can be either published as an application and accessed via an HTML 5 browser, or admins can use the Parallels RAS Web Console.

Specific Windows Features for Virtual Desktops: VMware Horizon View allows administrators to configure specific storage for Windows user profiles. Therefore, each time a user accesses a machine, he or she can have the same profile. Persona Management does not support RDS, but VMware User Environment Manager™ does.

Active Directory Support: VMware Horizon View operates on Active Directory or LDAP; therefore, newly created clones can be configured to be automatically added to a specific Active Directory OU (Organizational Unit). This allows administrators to better manage machines and create specific Group Policies for virtual desktops.

Conclusion

VMware came into the industry from a pure VDI solution, whereas Parallels RAS came from Microsoft RDS. VMware might be more suitable for VDI users—however, Parallels RAS will excel with RDS users. When considering both VDI and RDS solutions, RDS is cheaper than VDI.

As a VDI management tool, VMware Horizon View is difficult to set up, configure and use. Even though it is a dedicated VDI management solution, it has a number of shortcomings when compared to Parallels RAS. An out-of-the-box installation of VMware Horizon View is limited in functionality, requiring additional add-ons (some at an additional cost) to provide basic functionality.