Data#3

Citrix **on Microsoft Azure**

Rethinking your approach to day-to-day work

As the world adjusts to new ways of working, what steps are leaders taking to keep their workforces productive, collaborative and secure?

Introduction

The events of 2020 radically changed the nature of work for the majority of Australia's businesses and office workers.

For businesses and, in particular, IT teams, the sudden shift to remote working posed some key challenges: increased administrative workload, interrupted productivity, collaboration and communication hurdles, and even potential security risks.

According to a the most recent findings from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australians are still working from home in far greater numbers than they were before the pandemic, and this pattern is expected to continue. **Currently, 41% of people with a job are working from home at least once a week, compared with 24% before March 2020.[1]**

Now, with remote/hybrid working set to stay, at least in some capacity, businesses need to find ways to support their remote workers and enable them to do their best work from anywhere.

In this eBook, we highlight some of the challenges associated with enabling remote working, and outline how delivering desktop services using Azure can give your organisation the scalability, security and flexibility it needs.

Supporting a new, hybrid workplace:
the challenges

While countless Australian businesses were already enabling more flexible ways of working before COVID-19 struck, the events of 2020 certainly accelerated the pace and scale of the transition.

This shift to hybrid and remote working has brought with it some key challenges, including:

Increased workload for IT teams

Supporting remote workers with disparate devices while providing remote network access poses all kinds of challenges for today's IT teams, many of whom may themselves be working remotely.

If the business doesn't have a virtual desktop infrastructure in place, it can be extremely difficult to manage end devices for users. This is particularly the case when users are operating with disparate end devices (including personally owned devices), all with varying specs.

A recent study found that for 63% of IT professionals, **IT workloads have increased by 37% since going remote**. For instance, 70% said they had to provide increased VPN access to more employees, 54% had to source, set-up and distribute extra devices, and 52% had to create more "how to" resources for employees to help them get familiar with new ways of working.[2]

This extra administration and maintenance distract IT teams from true transformation initiatives, and leaves more room for errors to occur when it comes to day-to-day operations.

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Keeping workers productive

Ensuring that employees are still able to do their best work, from anywhere, has been another key challenge for businesses in the last 12 months.

Without access to a consistent desktop experience, nor access to their usual apps, files and services, employees simply can't be expected to get through the same amount of work, or to work as quickly and effectively, as they would usually.

When users struggle to log-in to an app, are forced to redownload certain tools, or are unable to find specific files, businesses will incur major impacts on productivity, especially in a large organisation.

As such, according to a recent Robert Walters survey, 60% of business leaders say they do not want to continue with flexible working arrangements because of productivity issues, logistical difficulties and dips in work quality.[4]

The impact is being felt by workers too. According to HubSpot's 2020 Remote Working Report, 23% of Australian workers are concerned about their productivity in a hybrid work environment[5].

Collaboration

Without consistent, familiar and easy access to information, users can struggle to collaborate or communicate as rapidly or as effectively as they would if they were in the office, or if using their traditional desktop.

In fact, almost half (47%) of Australian workers say they are concerned about effectively collaborating when working in a hybrid team.[7] Similarly, **20% of IT professionals also rate a lack of communication as their top challenge in this new normal.**[8]
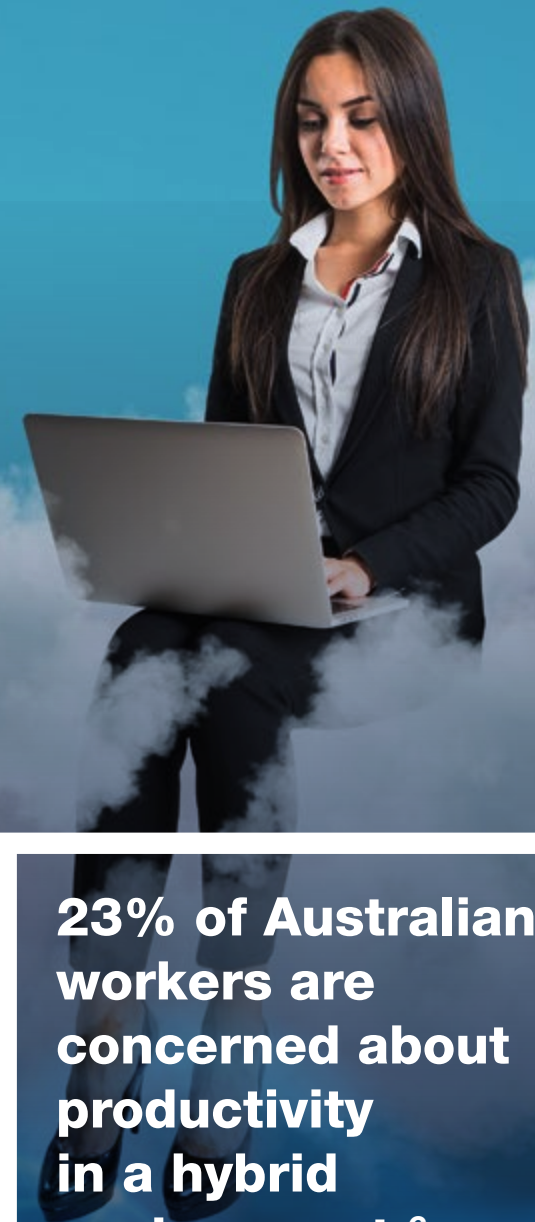
23% of Australian workers are concerned about productivity in a hybrid environment.[6]

Security

Users who are suddenly using devices and applications that may be personally owned or are unsanctioned can pose all kinds of threats to the corporate network. When devices aren't centrally managed and controlled by IT, there's no knowing what viruses or malware they may carry, or how many potential security gaps there are for cybercriminals to exploit.

Research also indicates that people working from home are more likely to take risks when it comes to cybersecurity.

In a recent study, **62% of businesses said that providing employees with secure access to the enterprise network and applications, from any device and at any time, was their top cybersecurity challenge right now**.[9]

Digital 'disconnect' between leaders and employees

According to a recent global survey by Citrix[10], we are also currently seeing a profound gap, or digital disconnect, between how business leaders and employees perceive the future of work.

For instance, while 73% of business leaders believe that technology and artificial intelligence will make workers at least twice as productive by 2035, only 39% of employees share this vision.

Similarly, although 75% of leaders believe organisations will create functions like AI management departments and cybercrime response units, fewer than half of employees actually anticipate these business units being in place by 2035.

"Whereas most business leaders anticipate a world of strong corporate structures powered by a flourishing human-tech partnership, employees foresee a much more fragmented world, with big corporations no longer dominant, and many roles replaced by technology," the report says.

While 73% of business leaders believe technology and AI will make workers at least twice as productive by 2035, only 39% of employees agree.[11]

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How a virtual desktop infrastructure can help

To ensure remote employees are able to work securely and efficiently, it's becoming increasingly imperative for businesses to have a virtual desktop infrastructure solution in place.

A virtual desktop infrastructure solution, like Citrix on Azure, enables IT teams to virtually control and manage their users' desktops with ease. All of the organisation's data sits within the secure Azure ecosystem, and users simply access it via a fully customised and purpose-built desktop image that is always identical for the user, regardless of where they are working or what device they are working on.

This delivers several crucial benefits:

Familiar, consistent ways of working

Citrix on Azure enables IT teams to provide employees with their familiar desktop experience – and access to all of their usual apps, files and services – from anywhere, and on any device. Plus, every single desktop image can be deployed and managed 100% remotely, with zero-touch from IT. Citrix Virtual Desktops Essentials can instantly provision and securely deliver hundreds or thousands of Windows 10 Enterprise desktops on Azure to every user worldwide.

This means there's no time wasted getting familiar with new tools, file structure, or a new interface. Everything on a worker's remote device is exactly the same as it would be if they were logging into their desktop at the office. It is also simple to keep users' desktops up to date with the latest technology, directly from Azure.

The Citrix Virtual Desktops Essentials service also provides every user with secure access to a high-definition Windows 10 Enterprise digital workspace on Azure regardless of whether they're on Mac, Android, Windows, or Linux devices.

Robust security

When employees are all working remotely, on their personal devices and with their own operating systems and software, they are subject to heightened security risks. With Citrix on Azure, however, the organisation can provide robust security, at scale.

It doesn't matter what device an employee is using, as their desktop – and all of their applications – are securely and virtually located in Azure. None of the employee's data is actually stored locally on their device. Instead, all of their files, and the data associated with their communication and collaboration, happens inside Azure. There's also the option of accessing new apps directly from the Azure marketplace, which are equipped with sophisticated security features.

Ease of management

A key benefit of Citrix on Azure is the ease of management it provides IT teams, particularly when updates are required at scale. With Citrix Virtual Desktop Essentials, updates to employees' desktops can be managed and deployed in a matter of minutes, via Azure, and entirely remotely. Rather than spending time configuring and deploying each user's desktop, updates can be provided to entire departments and teams – as needed – quickly and easily.

Citrix Virtual Desktops Essentials has also been designed specifically for the Azure Marketplace. Together, Citrix and Microsoft are partnering to deliver an integrated onboarding experience for both Citrix Virtual Desktops Essentials and Azure IaaS. This means you have a single interface through which you can complete the Windows 10 Enterprise digital workspace.

Scalability

For organisations that are going through a growth period, desktop management can fast become a major overhead – particularly when it needs to happen remotely. Even for organisations that have already invested significantly in on-premises Citrix infrastructure, the ability to scale up desktop deployment can be time-consuming.

Citrix on Azure alleviates this issue – providing you with the ability to very rapidly and easily scale up desktop deployment and management to hundreds or even thousands of new users.

Citrix on Azure can also work completely seamlessly alongside Citrix on-premises. This means that if organisations are likely to grow, but have already invested in an on-premises Citrix solution, they can operate both solutions concurrently. They can also then migrate across to Citrix on Azure as it suits, without any impact on the user experience.

Cost effectiveness

IT teams are increasingly under pressure to deliver more with less, especially when remote working has created additional demands on the overall IT infrastructure.

Citrix on Azure is delivered using flexible cloud services, which provides the ability to expand and contract computing resources on-demand. This elasticity simplifies management and reduces costs as you only pay for what they use.

Why Citrix on Azure?

A Citrix on Azure solution, supported by Citrix Desktop Essentials and Citrix Virtual App Essentials, makes it incredibly easy to deploy and update enterprise-class virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) services directly from Azure. Everything that a user would access via their Windows 10 Enterprise desktop, including files, data and applications, is stored and accessed directly from Azure – providing essential scalability, security and cost control.

Citrix on Azure + new Citrix Cloud Services:	
Citrix Virtual Desktop Essentials	**Citrix Virtual Apps Essentials**
Enables you to provide your users with a high performing Windows 10 Enterprise virtual desktop experience which is based in Azure. For your IT team, it also simplifies your Windows 10 migration, deployment and ongoing management, at scale.	This is a next-generation RemoteApp service that enables you to deliver apps from the Azure Marketplace with enterprise-level security and scale. It also provides your IT team with additional management, user experience and security features.

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Why Data#3?

Data#3 is Microsoft's largest Australian partner, and our relationship with Microsoft was established in 1994. Today, we are a Gold Certified Partner with significant breadth across the Microsoft solutions range. Data#3 is also a Platinum partner with Citrix.

The strength of these partnerships, coupled with our many certifications and areas of specialisation, makes us an ideal partner for implementing Citrix on Azure. We are Microsoft's only Australian partner to hold the Azure Expert Managed Services Provider certification, and have also achieved the Windows Server and SQL Server Azure Migration Advanced Specialisation. We have extensive experience in partnering with Microsoft Services for their Azure Modernisation Factory.

Data#3 ranks within the top ten Microsoft resellers globally, due to our ability to deliver outstanding business outcomes using Microsoft technology. Our proven methodology has been developed and refined from work with all sectors. We understand the journey businesses need to go on, and that no two are the same. As such, we have structured our services to support you – wherever you are on your migration path.

Success Story: Why **Uniting Vic.Tas** chose Citrix on Azure

Uniting Vic.Tas is the community services arm of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania. Their mission is to provide care and support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of local communities across Victoria and Tasmania.

The organisation was facing resiliency issues due to aging and disparate technology platforms, and wanted an environment that was capable of delivering broad services to their 7,000+ workforce of staff and volunteers located across 300 sites, who were working both onsite and remotely. They selected Data#3 as their technology partner to help them find a solution.

After reviewing Uniting's requirements, Data#3 recommended a Citrix on Azure solution. While the Azure platform is managed by Uniting's in-house IT team, their Citrix solution is managed by Data#3's highly skilled managed services team.

Having this centralised application delivery, deployed securely and efficiently within the public cloud, gives Uniting flexibility to adapt and rapidly scale to changing needs to best deliver community services. With the solution deployed across two separate Azure regions, Uniting now has confidence that they have a very high level of resilience. Also, where managing legacy infrastructure had become increasingly resource-intensive and had the potential to increase risk, the new Citrix on Azure solution allows for stability, as well as predictable and easily managed costs.

Read Customer Story

"It has been a great team effort. There are very few partners who can operate at the level of Data#3 and service such a large Azure/Citrix deployment as ours (scaled to 2,000 concurrent users with rollout to serve staff across 300 sites in Victoria and Tasmania)."

**Chris Pivec,
Chief Information Officer, Uniting Vic.Tas**

If you're interested in finding out more about Citrix on Azure and how it can work for your business, please get in touch.

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