

Ambitious user virtualization pioneer AppSense presses forward in challenging times

Analysts: Karin Kelly, Rachel Chalmers

AppSense has announced the integration of its platform with the **Citrix** CloudPortal Services Manager. The company has also introduced AppSense Strata, as well as the first element of a planned technology suite. Through the new AppSense Affinity Partner Program, the company will work with early partners such as **Lakeside Software**, **Centrix Software** and **App-DNA** (which Citrix just acquired) to create best practices and effective go-to-market strategies. AppSense is aggressively promoting what it calls 'desktop transformation lifecycle.' The idea is that an organization's desktop fleet should include some physical machines and some VMs, all centrally managed and arranged for the benefit of users.

The 451 take

Like most in the desktop industry, AppSense is talking about a 'post-PC world' and BYOD (bring-your-own-device) workplaces. At the same time, the company acknowledges that existing PC infrastructure needs to be preserved, so physical machines won't disappear any time soon. This means that AppSense will need to manage user environments across PCs, VMs and mobile devices. The company points out that Citrix's acquisition of RingCube Technologies, which added to Citrix's user profile management capabilities for virtualized workspaces, doesn't pose much of a threat because AppSense can manage across physical as well as virtual. Plus, AppSense claims to be in about 40% of Citrix accounts already, and will undoubtedly land more through its new integration with CloudPortal. As we witness the desktops-as-a-service model take off, AppSense, which already has the lead in the user virtualization space, is still positioned front and center.

Based on the asset acquisition of **EMS Cortex** in February, the Citrix CloudPortal will provide service providers with a management interface that integrates with existing billing, account management and service provisioning systems. AppSense's partnership with Citrix lets its Certified Service Providers use AppSense Environment Manager to control user-centric policies and configurations through the Citrix CloudPortal interface.

As its name suggests, AppSense Strata is a layering technology. In its first version, it lets users without administrative rights install their own applications. It works like this: first, a user is provisioned with a non-persistent desktop from the datacenter. When he or she attempts to install an application, they are given the option of installing it natively or in AppSense Strata, which is an isolated sandbox, or separate virtualization layer. Strata can recognize, intercept and place related file and registry processes in the AppSense Application Store. Strata can be used to install add-ins for applications that are installed natively, as well.

Native and Strata-installed applications run concurrently, and Strata can simply be disabled to remove unwanted applications. The free product is in private beta, and is expected to be generally available in the first quarter of 2012.

Original AppSense Affinity Partners include Centrix Software, Lakeside Software and App-DNA. Centrix brings desktop usage analytics, planning and management to AppSense customers. Lakeside brings VDI assessment and monitoring capabilities into joint deals. Now that Citrix has bought App-DNA, it's not clear how the relationship between App-DNA and AppSense will change. It's worth noting, however, that Lakeside and Centrix are also Citrix partners. Consolidation in this intertwined, nascent ecosystem essentially validates the importance of what all the partners are contributing.

Founded in the UK in 1999, AppSense now has more than 370 employees. The company has opened a research facility in Santa, Clara, California, that complements its Manchester, UK-based development team. AppSense moved its headquarters to New York City in 1999, and now claims that 50% of its sales are generated in the US. The company has reported revenue of \$71m in the past year, 80% of which came from managing physical machines. After receiving a \$70m investment from **Goldman Sachs**, AppSense has brought in some well-respected industry talent, including former Citrix CTO Harry Labana.

Competition

AppSense's closet competitor is also its oldest rival in the profile management space, **RES Software**, which also manages user profiles across both physical and virtual machines. AppSense points out that the two companies are beginning to move in different directions, and that RES has moved toward resource, service and task provisioning management with its Automation Manager offering. AppSense also says it wins bakeoffs because it has deeper support for App-V. Citrix, **Liquidware Labs**, **Immidio**, **Quest Software**, **Symantec** and **VMware** also have competing user profile management offerings.

Next come client hypervisor providers **MokaFive** and **Virtual Computer**, which include user virtualization as a default component of an abstracted desktop management stack. AppSense says it doesn't view Virtual Computer as a competitor, but more as a 'fat client OS' that it can work with. Next, there is the approach taken by **Unidesk** and **Wanova**, which involves abstracting the workspace at every layer of the stack, from hardware and OS to enterprise applications to user applications and identity. We call them next-generation workspace decomposition vendors. Finally, we have privilege and identity management firms **Avecto**, **Viewfinity** and **BeyondTrust**.

Reproduced by permission of The 451 Group; copyright 2010-11. This report was originally published within The 451 Group's Market Insight Service.

For additional information on The 451 Group or to apply for trial access, go to: www.the451group.com