



The Alternative to Citrix On-Premises Solution for Remote Application & Desktop Access



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Executive summary

Ericom Connect® is a proven, widely used and affordable solution for secure managed access to Windows desktops and applications, as well as for “webifying” private apps to enable access via the web. While comparable to Citrix® XenApp™ and Citrix® XenDesktop™ solutions in its performance, it continues to be available as an on-premises solution that is way simpler to use and substantially easier on your organization’s budget.

This paper examines common perceptions and misperceptions about server-based computing – largely stemming from Citrix-specific issues -- including solution complexity, cost of installation and deployment, security, ease of management, scalability and more.

Overview

Server-based computing (SBC) is a well-established method for delivering applications and desktops across multiple platforms and user locations. Despite its proven benefits, utilization of SBC is surprisingly low. This is most likely due to significant drawbacks of the specific SBC solutions that are best known in the market.

Today, even small organizations are reluctant to depend on entry-level solutions like the Remote Desktop Services (RDS) that’s built into Microsoft Windows due to limited functionality and management control. Large organizations that require more robust alternatives have often turned to solutions like Citrix.

Citrix offers much broader functionality than RDP but at an extremely high price and with a much greater degree of complexity. Even setting up a Citrix presentation demo or Proof of Concept requires several days of onsite installation and configuration by a certified Citrix professional. Citrix production environments require continued – and costly -- professional support. The intensive overhead is a significant disincentive for many organizations.

In an attempt to address some of these issues, at least partially, Citrix is now transitioning to a largely cloud-based model. While this may potentially ease some of the deployment issues, organizations that prefer on-premises deployment are justifiably concerned about being left behind. In addition, Citrix has recently unilaterally discontinued long-standing licensing options, replacing them with less attractive -- for customers, that is -- subscription pricing.

Ericom Connect cost and management advantages enable large-scale, cost-effective, centrally managed and secure server-based computing deployments for even budget-constrained organizations.

By contrast, Ericom Connect enables organizations to implement large-scale SBC deployments at cost and cost structures that will surprise and please Citrix users – and be particularly attractive to organizations that have been priced out of Citrix solutions. Savings include lower license fees, reduced support costs due to a simpler IT environment, built-in scalability, and more.

These cost and management advantages enable large-scale, cost-effective, centrally managed and secure server-based computing deployments for even budget-constrained organizations. Ericom Connect also provides local, remote and web-based access to applications, desktops and data, eliminating the need for IT administrators to install and configure applications on each and every user PC.



Why is demand for an alternative to Citrix so strong?

Choice and costs. For years, customers were faced with an almost complete lack of choice when it came to SBC solutions. And now, with Citrix increasingly moving deployments to the cloud, choice is being further curtailed. For organizations that require remote and web-based access to desktops, private apps and data, that means paying more for licenses and maintenance, being pressured to accept a cloud-based solution, and getting less support assistance and access to features you and your users need, such as ease of management, ease of use and quality of service.

Server-based computing's reputation for complexity is based almost entirely on the complexity of Citrix solutions, rather than any complexity that is inherent to the concept itself. In fact, since SBC enables centralized management of applications and access permissions to ensure data security, it can significantly reduce complexity – when done right.

Hence, the preferred approach would be to use an SBC solution that reduces IT complexity by optimizing the use of existing hardware; automatically installing client updates; constantly providing an up-to-date view of available services without requiring manual refreshes; enabling remote administration and support; and delivering a true seamless experience to end users.

Cost, both purchase price and total cost of ownership, is often a deterrent to full deployment of Citrix. The combined costs of licenses, maintenance, hardware, consulting, integration, training and help-desk support can be excessive — even overwhelming.

Citrix addresses this situation by providing multiple packages. The high-end package incorporates every possible bell and whistle, while lower-end packages offer limited capabilities. Unfortunately, this approach often exacerbates the situation: The high-end solution is often overkill, raising costs even higher, while the low-end solution is inadequate in terms of providing scalability and upgrade choices. Moreover, the customer often discovers that upgrading from the low-end solution requires purchasing new licenses, installing a different product and retraining staff.

In reality, a single solution is needed, that is both powerful and easy to use, can be deployed on-premises or in the cloud, per customer preference, and provides the core functionality organizations need without extraneous “gold plating.”¹

Considering the Desktop Virtualization (VDI) paradigm further compounds the picture; as IT organizations analyze VDI solutions and concepts, they begin to evaluate whether their needs will be better solved by Server-based Computing, Desktop Virtualization (VDI), or a combination of both.







Ericom Connect is a powerful and easy to use on-premises solution that provides the core remote access functionality organizations need without the extraneous “gold plating” that jacks up Citrix prices.



1. The cost barrier is even more significant for organizations with mixed server farms, multi-tenant environments, and/or multiple types of back-end systems (e.g., local and cloud-hosted systems). The preferred solution is a comprehensive product from a single vendor that can provide enterprise-wide access to all required systems.

How does Ericom Connect empower businesses and enterprises?

Ericom Connect aligns IT with business objectives and optimizes the application and desktop access infrastructure by providing the following:

-  Easy, non-complex access for local and remote users, from the office, home, customer sites, branch locations or while on the road.
-  Device-independent access, enabling users to connect interchangeably from Windows, Mac, and Linux desktops and laptops, as well as from thin clients.
-  Secure user access to office servers, workstations and applications from remote locations.
-  Highly scalable system and application load-balancing that allocates connections and applications to the optimal server, ensuring efficient use of server resources and a smooth, reliable user experience.
-  For flexibility, ease of use, and fast, intuitive interactions, end-users can launch remote applications and desktops in any way they choose — from the Start menu, from desktop icons, using the built-in, personalized web interface or via the Ericom AccessPad native interface.
-  The IT infrastructure management environment increases overall scalability, reliability and stability, and enhances asset management.



How does Ericom Connect reduce the cost of managing desktops?



It centralizes installation, management and update of corporate applications and desktops on a set of secured servers located in the data center, instead of requiring manual installation on a multitude of workstations dispersed throughout the organization and outside of it.



Centralized management and control eliminate the need to define settings at the user's desktop. In addition, the user interface can be published as an install-on-demand downloadable client, increasing staff efficiency.



The built-in Remote Desktop Support tool enables IT staff to provide fast, real-time user support and troubleshooting, enhancing productivity and reducing support wait times.



Ericom Connect supports thin-client computing. Thin-client devices are less expensive to purchase and have longer lifespans than the average PC. Moreover, all on going maintenance and administration is performed entirely at the server level, with no need to service or upgrade individual user devices. In addition, thin-client devices use significantly less power and produce less heat than traditional or laptop PCs, thus reducing power and A/C costs and supporting Green Computing.



Easy deployment across the organization

- Ericom Connect management layer supports any combination of servers running Windows Server 2012 R2 and higher.
- On the client side, Ericom Connect offers native clients for a wide range of Windows, Mac, Linux, Android and iOS platforms, as well as seamless browser-based access from any device using browser-native HTML5 capabilities.
- As a scalable and affordable solution, Ericom Connect can be deployed and used throughout the organization, rather than as a point solution for only select sectors.
- Ericom Connect simplifies IT staff tasks with enhanced productivity tools such as
 - Terminal Server CPU and memory optimization
 - Terminal Server Network performance monitoring and alerting
 - IT asset management

Get clientless access, opt for Windows, Mac, Linux, Android and iOS platforms native clients, or choose browser-based access from any device using browser-native HTML5 capabilities.

Ensuring application and desktop access security

- Ericom Connect can be combined with Ericom ZTNA to provide secure Zero Trust access to remote applications with no need to open firewall ports.
- For protection against hackers, a single port gateway enables information to be published securely beyond the firewall.
- Enterprise-level security includes SSL Gateway, Single Sign-on, two-factor authentication (RADIUS certification) and integration with leading SSL VPNs such as Juniper. Connections can be encrypted from clients to Terminal Servers, even across public networks.
- Ericom Connect facilitates compliance with major regulatory standards (such as SOX, JSOX and HIPAA) with features such as detailed logging and auditing and real-time monitoring of user sessions.

Comparative highlights at a glance

	Ericom	Citrix
Deployment and setup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete product installation and configuration in hours or less • No need for dedicated training and costly certification • On-premises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy & complex installation and configuration process • Requires certification to deploy and operate the platform • Moving to cloud
Enterprise-wide access solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single product for managing enterprise-wide access in Windows Terminal Server / Remote Desktop Services, physical desktop, and virtual desktop environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citrix XenApp requires multiple products (XenApp, XenDesktop, NetScaler) to provide enterprise-wide access in Windows Terminal Server / Remote Desktop Services, physical desktop, and virtual desktop environments
Application publishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish apps from a web-based console using any web browser - no install or plug-in required • Applications may be installed in different path locations on each server 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications must be installed in the exact same path on each server • Requires Microsoft Management Console (MMC) on Windows
Ease of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control all features / functions and configurations from a single, intuitive web-based administration console 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple interfaces (both Microsoft Management Console and web-based) are required to manage the Citrix environment. Admin needs to know where to go in order to configure different features
Scalability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports 100,000 users per management server, providing cloud-level scalability in an on-premises solution • Grid technology provides flexibility, redundancy and easy addition of new servers as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-premises solution supports 5,000-10,000 users per management server • Adding new servers to deployments is complex and costly
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ericom Blaze technology for optimizing RDP-based sessions is built into Connect. Ericom Connect also integrates seamlessly with Microsoft Remotefx 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citrix ICA/HDX protocol is a proprietary Citrix technology

	Ericom	Citrix
Reporting and analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built- in reporting capabilities -- an integral part of the admin web console – provide a wealth of reports and insights across multiple datacenters and tenants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citrix mainly provides a dashboard of alerts, errors and overall system health. It is not a business insight tool
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ericom Connect centrally manages data security and adheres to common regulatory and compliance policies (e.g., SOX, HIPAA, PCI DSS) • Ericom Connect provides monitoring and reporting of system and end- user usage, all from within a single management interface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many aspects of Citrix security are driven by NetScaler, which is a separate product that significantly increases the cost of the overall solution
Multi-site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined handling of multiple geographical site configurations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly complex multi-site configuration
Clientless access from HTML5 browsers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ericom's HTML5 remote access client is the most mature solution in the marketplace • A rich set of features including mobile optimized windows, gesture-based touch screen capabilities, and auto- sensing keyboard ensure a superb user experience for users on both mobile devices and workstations, and an overall consistent experience on any device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citrix HTML5 is usually suggested as a fallback method for their native clients • Citrix HTML5 does not include rich mobility tools, therefore users are generally directed to the native client
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ericom Connect is available in a variety of attractive pricing models with a flexible cost structure, including named user, concurrent user, site license and more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citrix baseline prices are generally higher and offer only a concurrent user-licensing model

Summary

As the dominant player in the virtualization space, Citrix has long dominated the market despite its complexity and high cost. Today, savvy organizations have discovered Ericom Connect, the Citrix alternative -- a simpler, more flexible and more affordable solution that offers more advanced features and broad options of how and where to deploy.

Contact us now to learn more about why your organization should join them and upgrade to Ericom Connect

[Request a Demo](#)





About Ericom Software

Ericom Software, the cybersecurity business unit of Cradlepoint, part of Ericsson (Nasdaq: ERIC), is a leading provider of cloud-delivered, Zero Trust cybersecurity solutions that protect today's digitally distributed organizations from advanced security threats. Ericom's ZTEdge™ platform is a comprehensive, simple, and cost-effective Security Service Edge (SSE) solution deployed on a high availability global cloud infrastructure. Learn more at www.ericom.com.

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