

Business & Careers

Finding a fit for virtual desktops in your firm



Luigi Benetton
Hi-Tech

Computer users typically keep the software and data they use on their computers. About five years ago, Will Davidson LLP began to access both software and data located on company servers using virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI).

Partner Paul Cahill rebels against this change to this day.

He understands the technology. VDI helps organizations that want to better manage technology and data. In a traditional VDI setup, employees “tunnel into” inside-the-firewall servers



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that host both their applications and data. Neither resides on individual computers.

It's decades-old technology. In the 1990s, Nick Nouri helped install Citrix so a client could make its accounting system work across New York, Chicago and California offices. Nouri, president of Vancouver-based Compunet Infotech Inc., claims the client saved seven figures using VDI, and he became convinced “the sky is the limit with this technology, for many types of companies and applications.”

Using VDI, staff can access their “desktops” in the office from wherever they are, a boon for highly mobile workforces. Keeping all company data on one server, or set of servers, makes backing it up easier than if it were to reside on numerous different devices.

Nouri's firm hosts customer

VDI environments (a.k.a. “private clouds”) in secure “server farms.” Not all clients buy into this structure 100 per cent, but Nouri is accommodating. He offered one customer a “reverse backup” service: “We installed a small server in their office that keeps a copy of all the company's data files in their private cloud, to give them peace of mind,” he says. (After a year, the client was confident enough in its private cloud that Compunet was asked to remove the server.)

VDI also simplifies the servicing of workstations at multiple locations, greatly reducing travel for IT staff.

“[Our IT contractor] was finding it difficult and frustrating to service individual workstations,” Cahill says, noting that his firm maintains 10 locations scattered throughout

Versatility, Page 22



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Business & Careers

Versatility: Browser restriction often not a factor

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south-central Ontario. “Even people working in the office use Microsoft Remote Desktop Connection,” he adds.

Cahill admits to being in the minority: “I’m one of the few people in the firm who refuses to use remote desktop, much to the chagrin of my IT guy.”

VDI works reasonably well, he admits, until he needs to work with larger types of files like images, sound and videos. That’s when performance suffers. “People end up closing their remote desktops, somehow transferring the files to their local desktops, looking at the information there,” he explains. “We no longer had one system.”

His sorest point is Will Davidson’s document management solution. He expects to scroll quickly through PDFs, no mat-



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I use Dropbox to share documents with experts when I investigate medical malpractice cases. You can’t use [the firm’s document management system] for radiographs.

Paul Cahill
Will Davidson LLP

ter how large, using this system. “You’d see the screen slowing down like old-school downloads from 1990s modems,” Cahill says.

Cahill has developed workarounds. He accesses resources on the server via network drives. He manually connected network printers to his local desktop. “I use Dropbox to

share documents with experts when I investigate medical malpractice cases,” he says, noting that his documents include diagnostic images and videos. “You can’t use [the firm’s document management system] for radiographs,” he notes.

Cahill accepts the system administrator’s security concerns when he notes that

employees can’t simply install new software. The tech-savvy Cahill chafes at these restrictions.

Working on an aircraft and other places devoid of Internet connections might not be possible. Even tethering to cellular modems like those in modern smartphones isn’t always feasible.

Nouri admits that if you buy

into full VDI, business flights might be time away from the office, like it or not.

There’s another way to derive many of the benefits of VDI without using VDI. Wortzmanns, a consultancy specializing in e-discovery, information governance and digital information management, has been evaluating different ways to better manage documents.

Chuck Rothman lists the firm’s priorities as security, reliability and productivity. “Speed is a big concern,” says Wortzmanns’ director of e-discovery services. “It’s no longer just speed to a server down the hall, but to servers in other parts of the city, or in another city.”

They concluded VDI isn’t cost-effective for a firm as small as theirs. “Given what’s available now through the cloud, it **Rothman, Page 23**



JUDICIAL VACANCY ONTARIO COURT OF JUSTICE TORONTO

The Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee advises the Attorney General of Ontario on the appointment of Judges to the Ontario Court of Justice, and invites applications for a judicial position in Toronto.

This appointment involves presiding over family and criminal law matters (approximately 75% family and 25% criminal) and also involves travel within the regional boundaries as assigned by the Regional Senior Justice and/or the Chief Justice.

The minimum requirement to apply to be a Judge in the Ontario Court of Justice is **ten years completed** membership as a barrister and solicitor at the Bar of one of the Provinces or Territories of Canada.

All candidates must apply either by submitting 14 copies of the **current (February 2016)** completed Judicial Candidate Information Form in the first instance or by a short letter (14 copies) if the current form has been submitted within the **previous 12 months**. **Should you wish to change any information in your application, you must send in 14 copies of a fully revised Judicial Candidate Information Form.**

If you wish to apply and need a current Judicial Candidate Information Form, or if you would like further information, please contact:

Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee
Tel: (416) 326-4060 Fax: (416) 212-7316
Website: www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/jaac/

All applications, either sent by courier, mail or hand delivery, **must** be sent to:

Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee
c/o Ministry of Government Services Mail Delivery
77 Wellesley Street West, Room M2B-88
Macdonald Block, Queen’s Park
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N3

Applications must be on the current prescribed form and must be **TYPEWRITTEN or COMPUTER GENERATED and RECEIVED BY 4:30 p.m. on Friday, February 3, 2017. CANDIDATES ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE 14 COPIES OF THEIR APPLICATION FORM OR LETTER.** A Fax copy will be accepted only if 14 copies of the application or letter are sent concurrently by overnight courier. Applications received after this date **WILL NOT** be considered.

The Judiciary of the Ontario Court of Justice should reasonably reflect the diversity of the population it serves. Applications from members of equality-seeking groups are encouraged.



POSTE À POURVOIR AU SEIN DE LA MAGISTRATURE COUR DE JUSTICE DE L’ONTARIO TORONTO

Le Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature conseille le Procureur général de l’Ontario sur les nominations de juges à la Cour de justice de l’Ontario et invite les personnes intéressées à présenter leur demande au poste de juge à Toronto.

Cette nomination comprend la présidence d’affaires de droit de la famille et de droit criminel (environ 75 % droit de la famille et 25 % droit criminel) et nécessite également des déplacements à l’intérieur des limites régionales, selon les assignations du juge principal régional ou du juge en chef.

Pour pouvoir poser sa candidature à un poste de juge à la Cour de justice de l’Ontario, il faut, comme condition minimale, avoir été inscrit comme avocat-plaidant et procureur au barreau de l’une des provinces ou de l’un des territoires du Canada **pendant au moins dix ans**.

Tous les candidats et candidates doivent poser leur candidature soit, dans le premier cas, en présentant le Formulaire de renseignements sur le candidat/la candidate à la magistrature **courant (février 2016)**, soit en envoyant une courte lettre (en 14 exemplaires) si le formulaire courant a été présenté au cours des **12 mois précédents**. **En cas de changements à apporter à un formulaire déjà envoyé, le candidat ou la candidate doit envoyer à nouveau 14 exemplaires du formulaire de renseignements corrigé.**

Si vous voulez poser votre candidature et que vous avez besoin d’un Formulaire de renseignements sur le candidat/la candidate à la magistrature courant, ou encore si vous souhaitez obtenir de plus amples renseignements, veuillez communiquer avec :

Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature
Téléphone : (416) 326-4060 Télécopieur : (416) 212-7316
Site Web : www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/fr/jaac/

Toutes les demandes envoyées par service de messagerie, par la poste ou en main propre **doivent** être soumises à l’adresse suivante :

Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature
a/s Ministère des Services gouvernementaux - Services de distribution du courrier
77, rue Wellesley Ouest, salle M2B-88
Édifice Macdonald, Queen’s Park
Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N3

Les demandes de candidature doivent être déposées par l’entremise du formulaire prescrit courant et DACTYLOGRAPHIÉES ou CRÉÉES PAR ORDINATEUR et **reçues au plus tard à 16 h 30 le vendredi 3 février 2017. LES CANDIDATS ET CANDIDATES DOIVENT FOURNIR 14 EXEMPLAIRES DE LEUR FORMULAIRE OU DE LEUR LETTRE DE CANDIDATURE.** Une télécopie ne sera acceptée que si 14 exemplaires du formulaire ou de la lettre de candidature sont également envoyés par service de messagerie de 24 heures. On n’accordera **AUCUNE** considération aux candidatures reçues après cette date.

La magistrature provinciale doit refléter raisonnablement la diversité de la population qu’elle sert. Nous encourageons les membres de groupes de promotion de l’égalité à présenter une demande.

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Rothman: Comfort taken in pro-privacy court decision

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doesn't make economic sense," Rothman says.

When Microsoft activated servers on Canadian soil, the firm began migrating Office 365 and SharePoint to Microsoft's cloud-based services. They had tested these services prior to making the jump. "We found that we will be able to work the same way that we work now," Rothman says.

He adds that Office 365 lets him work offline and syncs with the server when he gets back online. SharePoint behaves the same way. (Rothman admits he has no access to his firm's cloud-based e-discovery system without an Internet connection.)

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The court says the U.S. can't get data that isn't stored in the U.S. That doesn't stop the Canadian government from getting our data.

Chuck Rothman
Wortzmans

Rothman derides arguments against cloud computing, wryly noting that Microsoft probably spends more on security and reliable service than his 10-workstation firm does.

He also takes comfort in a

pro-privacy court case decision. U.S. law enforcement officials sought e-mails stored by Microsoft in Ireland. Microsoft challenged the decision. Other tech titans and the country of Ireland filed briefs in support of

Microsoft's challenge, and the subpoena was quashed. "The court says the U.S. can't get data that isn't stored in the U.S." Rothman says. "That doesn't stop the Canadian government from getting our data," he adds.

Rothman takes exception to the implied meaning of "outside the firewall" as outside a firm's control. He notes that data on Microsoft's servers is encrypted and only accessible to Wortzmans staff.

VDI and cloud-based systems (especially those that have migrated to HTML5) don't often restrict users to specific browsers, or even operating systems. Rothman, for instance,

plans to switch his work computer to a Mac.

Few firms go all-VDI, or all-cloud. For instance, Wortzmans' accounting system still resides on an internal server since it doesn't feature a cloud option.


But Nouri insists most off-the-shelf software is VDI-compatible. While he has run into issues getting older, more customized software to work properly in a virtual desktop environment, "software vendors understand the market is adopting thin clients, remote desktop environments," Nouri says.

We want to hear from you!

Send us your verdict:

comments@lawyersweekly.ca

ANNOUNCEMENTS



**The Ottawa Region
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Law Seminar**

Thursday, February 16, 2017
Time: 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Centurion Conference and Event Center
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