



# 11 More Alternative Desktop and App Virtualization Vendors

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After I joined TechTarget's Enterprise Strategy Group, I wrote an article about all the alternative VDI and DaaS platforms I could think of that stood to gain from the disruption happening among the top three companies in the industry: Microsoft, Citrix and VMware.

With 11 names on the list, I felt like it was fairly comprehensive, but over the past year I've learned about more companies in the space and thought it was time to write a follow-up.

## Recent evolutions in the desktop virtualization market

With the latest changes to the desktop virtualization market in mind, the total number of companies that I'm tracking is up to a whopping 22. Since things change rapidly, it's worth pointing out a few changes that have happened since the first list was posted.

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### **DIZZION AND FRAME**

Two of the companies listed in the original article, Dizzion and Frame, merged in 2023, after which they relaunched with Frame as the platform offered by Dizzion. This is a welcome change of pace, and it adds some momentum to Frame that it lacked when it was owned by Nutanix. It also gives Dizzion more flexibility than it had when the platform was based on VMware Horizon behind the curtain. By all appearances, it really does combine the best of both companies.

### **VMWARE EUC TO BE SOLD OFF BY BROADCOM**

When the last article was written, we knew that Broadcom intended to acquire VMware. That deal closed in November of 2023, and we have since learned that Broadcom intends to divest itself of VMware's end-user computing business unit. I explored what this could look like in another article, and while things remain business as usual for the time being, this does contribute to the aforementioned disruption at the top of the market.

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### **CAMEYO INTEGRATED WITH CHROMEOS**

While not a substantial change to the platform, Cameyo and Google announced that the Cameyo client has been integrated into ChromeOS out of the box. This represents a tightening of their relationship, and an increased focus on the need to deploy Windows apps for Google. Or, to put it another way, Google's realizing that not all apps are web apps.

### **PARALLELS LAUNCHED A NEW DAAS PLATFORM**

Parallels, long known for its remote access server product, has released a DaaS platform built from the ground up for customers that don't care about the infrastructure and just want easy access to virtual desktops and apps. Simplicity is its goal, and it says a customer can be up and running in production in an hour or less.

### **WORKSPOT PIVOTED TO A FULL, BUT SIMPLE, PLATFORM**

Workspot has been around for a long time and has taken various approaches when positioning itself. Most recently, the company has shifted away from a managed service offering and instead has focused on using its platform to offer a hybrid desktop virtualization platform that customers can deploy on their own, leveraging workloads in any location. According to Workspot, its advantage is that the platform it

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built to make things easier for the company to manage also makes things simpler and easier to manage for customers that want to deploy the platform on their own. It is also partnered with AWS and works with Amazon WorkSpaces Core -- one of three, along with VMware Horizon and Leostream.

## Desktop virtualization alternatives list, part 2

With those bits of news out of the way, here's the list of additional alternatives to major vendors for VDI, DaaS and app virtualization. These tools were selected using my 25-plus years of experience covering the virtual desktop industry. The list was further curated based on the vendors' prominence in the virtual desktop market and position as alternatives to Citrix, Microsoft and VMware.

### APPORTO

I was surprised that I didn't know about Apporto, which has been around for several years and serves 200 customers, many of which are in the higher education market. Its service is sold as a fixed annual cost based on concurrent users at a certain profile based on resource needs -- CPU, memory, etc. The vendor uses its own H.264-based protocol, supports hybrid environments and cloud bursting and can even broker workloads running on Macs, such as computer labs.

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### CLLOUDALIZE

This vendor focuses almost exclusively on workloads with high-end graphics and has customers in architecture, engineering, construction and other demanding verticals. Cloudalize licenses Citrix HDX, and it has built its own data center that both helps lower costs and increases efficiency when accessing the huge amounts of data that high-end workloads require. It even hosts Nvidia Omniverse and can deliver its high-end simulation and collaboration features to remote users.

### DROPLET COMPUTING

With one of the more unique approaches, Droplet isn't so much a VDI or DaaS platform as it is an isolation layer built on its NeverTrust security model. This isolation layer is essentially a secure container that IT administrators can deploy anywhere -- locally and across OSes or as a remotely delivered app. Both the front- and back-end systems can be placed in the containers, which its customers can use to secure and make their legacy applications compliant. I saw a demo of a container that held Internet Explorer 8, connecting to an unsecured website running on an IIS 7 web server in another Droplet container.

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### **KASM**

Kasm's platform is built on the idea that most apps these days are browser apps and accessing these apps across an increasingly large number of potentially unsecured devices leads to an increased security footprint. Its way to fix this is a combination of modern containers running a minimal OS environment with just the apps the users need and a secure browser, which is then remoted to the local browser. It can also take a similar approach with Windows apps, though from what I can tell, the lion's share of its customers are delivering browser apps to unsecure devices.

It's certainly an alternative for those customers using desktop virtualization solely for the purpose of remote browser isolation, which is also an area that enterprise browsers such as Island and Talon are focusing on. Kasm is taking what it does one step further by combining it with modern approaches to classic desktop virtualization use cases.

### **MACSTADIUM**

If Windows apps and desktops aren't an organization's focus and there is a use case for delivering remote access to Macs, MacStadium and its Orka Pulse protocol can provide a significant upgrade to the Mac desktop virtualization options and experiences of the past. It also can deliver desktops using HP Teradici PCoIP. As

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many of us know, virtualization with MacOS has always been a challenge, and MacStadium has built its business around a data center full of 1:1 dedicated or virtualized Apple hardware. This ensures that everything is compliant with Apple's policies.

### **PARSEC**

Whereas most of the companies listed here reached out to me directly, Parsec came to my attention from the desktop virtualization community. Several people reached out after the first blog post and told me I needed to check it out. What I found was a remote access offering that was ridiculously easy to set up, with a fantastic remote protocol experience. It's worth noting that it only appears to be targeted toward game and 3D designers that work with the Unity engine -- from the company that also owns Parsec -- so it is likely not a fit for all environments.

### **SONET.IO**

One of the more interesting approaches on this list, Sonet.io sits between customers' apps -- Windows, SaaS, virtual, etc. -- and the endpoint's web browser. Once a user logs into their Sonet environment, everything they do is rendered remotely and streamed to the endpoint. This vendor launched its product with web and SaaS app support, and has recently introduced support for delivering Windows apps with a

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simple app publishing process without all the baggage customers can expect from a more traditional app virtualization platform.

In addition to the benefits of not sending any actual data to the endpoint, Sonet also adds in user activity logging, session recording, reporting, zero trust, anomaly detection and other security features. Plus, since any workload sits behind Sonet's Elastic Cloud, admins can add compliance and security to apps that wouldn't otherwise have those features.

## TEHAMA

Like many others on this list, Tehama takes a security-above-all approach. Its platform creates workrooms, each of which can have its own security and auditing settings, that can be as integrated or as isolated from each other -- and the rest of customers' infrastructure -- as needed. This approach also lets customers add strict access controls, encryption and auditing mechanisms to the workloads contained in each room.

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### TRUGRID

Focused on security, TruGrid's goal is to remove the need for deploying VPNs and gateways or for poking holes in the firewall. Its platform combines security features such as threat detection, vulnerability scanning and multifactor authentication, along with end-to-end encryption with reverse tunneling technology. TruGrid offers both app publishing and VDI desktops, and customers can deploy those desktops in any cloud they choose. Both delivery methods work with MSPs and midmarket enterprises, primarily, and aim to be as simple to deploy as possible. In fact, the vendor offers implementation services as part of the product purchase, as well as personalized support services.

### TURBO.NET

Turbo.net is another alternative that focuses less on the desktop virtualization aspect and more on a unique way to manage and deliver applications. It has essentially built an application container that can run in local or virtual desktops, into which IT can deploy apps from a centralized management interface. Users can also access apps using a web portal that will deploy an app into the container if it's not already there. There are thousands of apps already packaged, or customers can package their own. Plus, it offers a product that can stream the app interface using HTML5 to non-Windows systems.

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### V2 CLOUD

Of all the companies on this list, V2 Cloud is notable for being unabashedly SMB-focused to the point that it offers four hours of professional deployment services to any new customer to get them up and running. Though, the company says it really only needs about 20 minutes and the rest is just for customers to establish a level of comfort.

The desktop environments run in data center capacity that it leases from data centers around the world; so, while it's not public cloud, customers still don't have to deploy anything on premises. This adds up to an offering for small environments that don't have the IT staff to design something in-house and are too small to cost-effectively leverage other mainstream platforms. Of course, V2 Cloud serves larger customers too, but the attention to SMB is nice to see for a segment that often flies under the radar of bigger vendors.

## Will there be more alternative desktop virtualization vendors?

Altogether across these two posts, I've mentioned 25 companies that have developed desktop virtualization platforms or competitors -- and that's not even counting adjacent technologies, such as enterprise browsers. Undoubtedly, there are others,

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and this list is not intended to be exhaustive. I can think of a few I left off just because I didn't have enough information to confidently share -- and one that asked to not be included because it didn't want to raise any eyebrows.

One thing that seemed to be a common thread when speaking to these companies is that they don't often run into each other in the market, which suggests there is a lot of room for each of them to grow. I currently have some research planned that will take a deeper dive into desktop and app virtualization, which will better characterize the opportunity for them and the needs from customers. I can't wait to take a look at it and share the results.

With so many companies to track, I'd sincerely appreciate any information on experiences you've had with these platforms, so feel free to reach out. And if I've missed anyone that really should be included, you know where to find me.

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