Skype for Business via Citrix

By Gretchen Heber

Microsoft's Skype for Business (formerly known as Lync) has become an indispensable communication tool for smart businesses. In fact, according to Citrix, 90 of the Fortune 100 companies run Microsoft Skype for Business for media-rich video calling, voice calling, conferencing and screen sharing. As of about a year ago, more than 100 million people were using Skype for Business to communicate for work, says Citrix. And according to Microsoft, 79% of U.S. enterprise customers use or plan to use Skype for Business for telephony. Additionally, 3 out of 4 Citrix customers adopting unified communications have chosen Skype for Business.

However, without proper optimization, virtual desktop and application users will likely find the Microsoft Skype for Business experience to be less than desirable. To optimize the Skype for Business experience with crisp video and audio, even when working in a virtual desktop, IT managers must find the right combination of infrastructures.

The Citrix HDX RealTime Optimization Pack for Microsoft Skype for Business delivers a truly native Skype for Business UI experience. It offers clear, crisp high-definition video calls on optimized architecture. Users can seamlessly participate in audio-video or audio-only calls to and from other Skype for Business users, Optimization Pack users and other standards-based video desktop and conference room systems.

In lieu of the optimization pack, of course, IT managers can opt for a "generic delivery" of Microsoft Skype for Business. However, relying on Citrix's ICA protocol, a key element of Citrix HDX (high-definition experience) can put a significant load on your servers (especially for video) and can cause delay and an overall degraded experience, especially if the other party in a Skype for Business call is utilizing a similar virtualized experience.

In the optimized method, the system architect deploys either a Citrix or Microsoft optimization solution. This entails essentially splitting the Skype for Business client into two parts. The user interface lives inside the virtual host, while the media rendering runs on the endpoint. According to Citrix, this allows for a very rich rendering of the audio and video experience.

Choose the right Skype for Business optimization for your environment requires thorough consideration of your Skype for Business environment and the endpoints that users will be using. Whitehat can help you evaluate and select the best optimization solution for your environment.

The Citrix HDX RealTime Optimization Pack for Microsoft Skype for Business offers a rich experience, with all media rendered on endpoint, as well as less resource impact on the XenApp/XenDesktop hosts. It

also allows for use of high-tech Skype for Business optimized headsets and handsets. Installation on client devices is simple with minimal prerequisites.

Additional advantages of the Citrix HDX RealTime Optimization Pack for Microsoft Skype for Business:

- Supports delivery with XenApp using Windows Server OS's
- Can be used remotely from the enterprise network in conjunction with Skype for Business Edge Services (users making Citrix connections via NetScaler Gateway)
- Wide choice of supported thin client devices
- Support provided by both Microsoft and Citrix support
- Supported method for delivering Skype for Business 2015 as seamless app from XenApp
- No requirement for both sides of the optimized architecture to authenticate to the backend
- Requires no modification to the Skype for Business server back end

From a user perspective, the latest (2.0) Citrix HDX RealTime Optimization Pack for Microsoft Skype for Business offers a number of new features including response groups and team call groups, voicemail integration, automatic join meeting audio, emoticons, web proxy support, status icons (connection, connected, etc.) and more.

For more information about how you can implement or improve Skype for Business in your Citrix environment, call Whitehat Virtual Technologies today at 888-406-8719.