

Debian-User: Re: Mainframe & thin-client (was Re: Microsoft good press over Longhorn)

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Source: <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/Debian/2003-11/1123.html>

From: Ron Johnson (ron.l.johnson_at_cox.net)

Date: 11/06/03

To: Debian-User <debian-user@lists.debian.org>

Date: Thu, 06 Nov 2003 08:17:16 -0600

On Thu, 2003-11-06 at 03:45, cr wrote:

> *On Tue, 04 Nov 2003 20:19, Ron Johnson wrote:*

>> *On Mon, 2002-11-04 at 00:06, cr wrote:*

>>> *On Tue, 04 Nov 2003 01:15, Ron Johnson wrote:*

>>>> *On Sun, 2002-11-03 at 01:14, cr wrote:*

>>>>> *On Sun, 02 Nov 2003 23:37, Paul Johnson wrote:*

>>>>>> *On Sat, Nov 01, 2003 at 05:13:01PM +0000, Pigeon wrote:*

>>>>>>> *Nah, that was EDIT.COM - before that appeared I used to use the*

>>>>>>> *Turbo C editor to edit text files; I think the guys who wrote*

>>>>>>> *EDIT.COM did too.*

>>>>>>>

>>>>>>> *I remember c:\dos\edit.com fondly as well, probably the best text*

>>>>>>> *editor to ever come out of MS. Still doesn't hold a flame to*

>>>>>>> *emacs, but hey, it's Microsoft we're talking about here, so what do*

>>>>>>> *you expect?*

>>>>>>>

>>>>>>> *Well, I discovered Edit when our department got a IBM PC with a*

>>>>>>> *dot-matrix printer. At that time we engineers had to write*

>>>>>>> *specifications on a mainframe terminal in some 'scripting' language,*

>>>>>>> *send them off to some queue, phone up Accounts (who owned the*

>>>>>>> *mainframe) and beg them nicely to run some compiler on it and send it*

>>>>>>> *to the Print queue, then phone up Printing and tell them it was ours.*

>>>>>>> *If we were lucky, next day, we'd get the result and (if we'd made*

>>>>>>> *no mistakes in our scripting!) it would be readable. If not...*

>>>>>>>

>>>>>>> *Nobody told me about Edit, I found it by accident. But as soon as I*

>>>>>>> *saw it I recognised The Future. Or, Freedom. I printed off one*

>>>>>>> *page to prove to myself that it would work, went to the mainframe*

>>>>>>> *terminal, logged in, typed "Change Password", shut my eyes and typed*

>>>>>>> *in random letters, locking myself out of the detested mainframe*

>>>>>>> *forever. :)*

>>>>>>>

>>>>>>> *Does anyone wonder why I hate Thin Clients...? ;)*

>>>>>

>>>>> *I hate to use such strong words, but to compare the centralized*

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> > > > *control of resources that existed on *old* mainframes with the*
> > > > *centralized control of resources on a thin–client/fat–server and*
> > > > *find any but the most basic similarities is verging on delusion.*
> > > >
> > > > *After all, it's no more difficult to have a printer sitting on your*
> > > > *desk, or down the hall with a TC/FS network–based system as it is*
> > > > *when you have stand–alone or fat–client/thin–server system. And*
> > > > *you're still running all the same apps, no matter what.*
> > >
> > > *The *major* similarity between mainframes and Thin Clients is, that as a*
> > > *user on a Thin Client, I am stuck with the software and the settings that*
> > > *are installed on the Fat Server (or whatever it's called). Those are*
> > > **not* the same apps as I choose to run on my old W95 box, I can't install*
> > > *anything of my own on the server. (I already asked that one, and I knew*
> > > *what the answer would be. Mainframe Mentality is creeping back).*
> >
> > *Yes, that's true, and, being An Old Mainframe Guy, who still works*
> > *on host–based systems (OpenVMS), I like the idea of being able to*
> > *tell the user, "No, you can *not* mangle your machine, then bitch*
> > *at me for taking all day to try to fix what you broke, or all day*
> > *and all night recovering the office from a virus/worm/trojan that*
> > *you introduced onto the LAN".*
>
> *Or in other words, "Don't let the users touch *anything*". I can see why*
> *that might appeal to a sysadmin... I hope it's obvious why it's anathema to*
> *me (as a user).*

Well, you've got your own \$HOME. dot files to override default functionality, ability to customize your desktop, etc.

Oh, wait, it's a Windows TC. Never mind...

> *I long ago came to an understanding with our IT guys – "we don't want to know*
> *what you've got on it but don't expect us to fix it if it crashes", to quote*
> *one of them. I've respected that and avoided doing anything that might*
> *crash it, successfully so far.*
>
> *Hey, *I* don't use Outhouse Excess or Internet Exploiter with ActiveX and*
> *everything else set to auto–run. I won't be the one who clicks on the*
> *attachment in a strange email. ;)*

Good. One less desktop for them to worry about.

> > *Also, standardization: with TC/FS, there's no possibility of*
> > *5 different versions of Windows (plus Service Packs), or a half*
> > *dozen versions of kernels and distros floating around the org,*
> > *causing weird incompatibilities.*
>
> *Well actually, we have that, since the various machines that are now used as*
> *de facto dumb terminals date from different vintages. And a number of*

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Then it's not the same TC/FS setup as in the Linux world, where you net–boot directly from the server.

> *things that worked previously on the network do not work properly on the Thin Client setup.*

That's Windows for you...

> > > *On 'my' (actually the company's) old W95 box, I have Opera, graphics viewers,*

> > <TOPIC=OFF>

> > *Blech. Win95? That's so ancient, that, if kernel.org is to be believed (www.kernel.org/pub/linux/kernel/v1.2/), it's release coincides with linux–1.2.13.tar.bz2.*

> > </TOPIC>

>

> *Well, on a Pentium 150, W2K might not want to run very well. Officially 95*

Yeah, guess you're right...

> *is just used to run a terminal window, thus allowing the company not to have to buy more expensive hardware just to run M\$'s latest and greatest.*

It would be a great Linux TC, though.

> > > *Xbasic, a pretty cool screensaver, heaps of other W95 freeware.....*

> > > *They're the only things that make using a Windoze box tolerable, for me.*

> > > *It's about freedom of choice, you know? Fortunately for me, I also*

> > > *have a considerable number of little engineering programs installed which*

> > > *justifies me keeping my old box.*

> >

> > *You run engineering apps in 2003, on a 5–8 year old box? You'd*

> > *be *much* happier with Win2k.*

>

> *You are, of course, joking. W2K has nothing going for it that 95 can't do,*

> *so far as I can tell. But since I've only experienced 2K on the Thin*

> *Client, maybe it has capabilities I'm not allowed to use. Don't know, don't*

> *really care.*

Win2K allows you to access more than 256MB RAM. And, of course, the higher MHz means programs run much faster.

> *I *have* encountered XP, on my father's Windoze box. I think the 'cute'*

> *paperclip about sums up XP.....*

Yeah, it looks like a toy to me, too.

> > *Or do your apps not work in Win2k?*

>

> *Dunno. Some of 'em are still written in QuickBasic or GW–Basic. Does 2K*

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> *come with QuackBasic?*

Nope. Maybe you can copy the needed files from W95? But since those BASIC interpreters don't use more than 64KB RAM, maybe you don't need more RAM for those apps.

> > *When you work for someone else, you have a lot less freedom of choice than at home, or at your own business.*

>

> *Yeah. Doesn't mean I give up all rights. I'm supposed to be paid to think. Also to work out the best way to do things. Unfortunately (as dictatorships are always discovering) you can't put limits on what people think about. If what I'm trying to do is made more difficult because either the software is shit, or because I can't modify it because the Thin Client environment won't let me, what am I supposed to do? Go braindead and just take a happy pill?*

Yes, you are!!!

But seriously, just because TC sucks when done "the MS way", don't write off TC/FS completely.

> > > *Thin Clients might be suitable for copy typists, data entry clerks and Dumb Users. Certainly not for engineers or anybody who's likely to be reading this list. If we thought Microcrap was the greatest we wouldn't be on this list, right?*

> >

> > *Guess what? Thin-clients work *great* on Linux! <http://www.ltsp.org>*

> >

> > *TC obviously isn't suitable for your tasks, but to say "Does anyone wonder why I hate Thin Clients...?" is a very "big" sentence.*

>

> **I* hate Thin Clients, for the very good reasons I stated. I never said everybody else has to, I guess there are zillions of Windoze users out there who are perfectly happy locked in a cosy padded cell.*

Again, it's MS, not TC.

--

Ron Johnson, Jr. ron.l.johnson@cox.net

Jefferson, LA USA

The difference between Rock&Roll and Country Music?

Old Rockers still on tour are pathetic, but old Country singers are still great.

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