



White Paper



ACP vs. CITRIX

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This article covers the most common features found in the Thin Client management software packages from ACP (ThinManager) and Citrix (Presentation Manager, previously called MetaFrame).

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FEATURE COMPARISON

THINMANAGER 3.1 & PRESENTATION MANAGER 4.5

This article covers the most common features found in the Thin Client management software packages from ACP (ThinManager) and Citrix (Presentation Manager, previously called MetaFrame). First, the three biggest differences between ThinManager and Presentation Manager:

1. ThinManager manages the Thin Client network, the Thin Clients themselves and the Windows Server configurations, allowing configuration of the individual hardware, connection protocol, video resolution, serial port configuration, user preferences, etc. Presentation Manager relies on the management software provided by the various Thin Client companies, so the end user must learn and maintain another software package in addition to Presentation Manager for each model of Thin Client purchased.
2. ThinManager is available in Enterprise versions that allow an unlimited number of Thin Clients to connect for a single fixed price. Citrix customers pay per connection.
3. Clients running under Presentation Manager will have a local operating system (usually Windows CE or Embedded XP) with a user interface. ThinManager Ready Thin Clients receive their OS over the network when they boot which speeds up the power-up process. This also extends the life of the clients and gives customers the assurance that all ThinManager Ready Thin Clients have the same OS regardless of the hardware manufacturer.

FEATURES IN COMMON

Application Publishing

Allows end users to start a particular application based on the application name instead of having to log into the correct Terminal Server and then locate the application. The user can have a number of these accessible from his Thin Client, each one running on a different Terminal Server. Citrix calls this “Published Applications”; ACP calls it “Applink”.

Application Load Balancing

A Terminal Server can only host so many Thin Clients before performance begins to suffer. Load Balancing spreads the load among the available servers. Citrix calls this simply “Load Balancing”; ACP calls it “Smart Session”. While available on every ThinManager license it is only available on the top levels of Presentation Manager. Presentation Manager also requires Citrix software to be installed on each Terminal Server that will be added to the pool of available servers, and that users have the Enterprise level of Windows 2003 Server. ThinManager does not require any special software to be installed on the servers, and can utilize servers with any Windows Terminal Server OS.

Connect to a Single Application

Rather than logging into a particular Terminal Server and displaying a full Windows desktop on the Thin Client, both ThinManager and Presentation Manager allow the Thin Client to log onto a particular server and run only one of the applications installed on that server.

Shadowing

Presentation Manager can only shadow a session, so if a particular Thin Client is not running a session at the time it cannot be viewed. ThinManager actually shadows the Thin Client’s complete desktop, so the administrator sees exactly what the user sees.

Server Groups

Allows administrators to create server groups based on different categories, such as operating system, geographic location, department or other user-defined criteria, so administrators can precisely target application delivery to the desired servers.

Local Com Port Access

Applications can read from and write to com ports local to the Thin Clients.

Windows-Based Client

Can run a Terminal Session on a standard Windows PC (does not require a Thin Client).

Local storage on Thin Clients

Server can access local disk drives (for fat clients) and USB storage devices on the clients.

Session Reconnection

If the client loses contact with the Terminal Server, both products can keep the session open for an easy reconnection once the network becomes available again.

Multi-Monitor Support for Spanning the Same Session Across Monitors

While both Citrix and ACP support multiple monitors on a single Thin Client, Citrix only allows application spanning (the same program to be shown across multiple monitors). ThinManager allows spanning and or a different session to be shown on each monitor.

Session Following

Users can log into a Thin Client at any location and have access to any of their sessions. Citrix calls this SmoothRoaming and is limited to the single session that Citrix supports. When a ThinManager user connects through a different client all of his sessions are available.

Smart Card Support

Citrix and ACP both allow user identification via smart card technology, and both can bring the user's existing sessions to the client once he has successfully logged in.

FEATURES EXCLUSIVE TO THINMANAGER

Instant Failover

ThinManager Ready Thin Clients can connect to two different Terminal Servers at the same time, displaying one session and keeping the other one active in the background. If the client detects a problem with the primary session it will immediately switch to display the background session. The user can also toggle between these two sessions with a hot key.

Multi-Session

All Thin Clients running under ThinManager can simultaneously run sessions on any number of Terminal Servers, all accessible by either a key sequence or a drop down menu selection.

E-mail Event Notification

Multiple levels of events can trigger local messages at a designated operator's console and/or an e-mail message. These messages can be generated by events at the client or the server.

Automatic Thin Client configuration

Under ThinManager, Thin Clients are truly "plug and play". When any ThinManager Ready Thin Client boots, ThinManager will identify the particular model and send the appropriate configuration and drivers to the device, including touch screen support and com port configuration and the current local OS version. This ensures that a client purchased as a backup can be taken of the shelf several years later and still work like the current clients. ThinManager also allows replacement Thin Clients to simply assume a session of a failed client, even if the client is a different hardware model. This allows swapouts without any IT department intervention.

Network Boot

Each ThinManager Ready Thin Client receives its local OS each time it boots. Not only does this result in a quicker boot than clients with an embedded OS, but it also ensures that each client is always running the same version of software.

Dual Ethernet

ThinManager Ready Thin Client that have two Ethernet ports can connect to two different servers at the same time, drastically decreasing the chances that a network problem could isolate the client.

Share Keyboard and Mouse

ThinManager allows a single keyboard and mouse to be shared among as many as 5

Thin Clients. The user is then able to slide the mouse off the screen of one client and have it move onto the screen of another, saving desk space.

Touch Screen Modules

Because ACP controls the clients, we have the ability to load drivers for specific Thin Client hardware, such as almost every model of touch screen.

Local Screen Savers Display Different Sessions

A ThinManager Ready Thin Client can be set up to page through all of the running sessions when it is idle.

Multiple Monitors Displaying Different Sessions

ThinManager allows up to five monitors on a single Thin Client, with each monitor displaying a different session. ACP also allows a combination of spanned monitors and monitors displaying different sessions on the same client.

FEATURES EXCLUSIVE TO PRESENTATION MANAGER

Seamless Windows

Remote applications are available on a PC's desktop as if they were installed locally on the PC. The applications show up in the local taskbar and the user can even tile and cascade between local and remote applications.

Content Publishing

Allows administrators to publish document files, media files, Web URLs, and any other types of files from any network location. Icons for published content appear in Program Neighborhood and on the Windows desktop. Users can double-click published content icons to access content in the same way as published applications. Content publishing uses local applications to display contents, so the required software must be installed locally.

Client Desktop Integration

Thin Clients running under Presentation Manager usually have a Microsoft Windows interface built into the client. Because of this, Presentation Manager allows applications to be added to the Windows start menu to appear as if installed locally.

High-Color on Windows 2000

Presentation Manager supports 24-bit color on both Windows 2000 and Windows 2003 server. Thin Clients under ThinManager only support high-color on Windows 2003 Server (unless the customer has Presentation Manager installed on a Windows 2000 Server).

Publish applications to any Thin Client

Presentation Manager allows server based applications to be displayed on almost any model of Thin Client or PC (even Mac).

Access Gateway (Similar to Secure Gateway)

Connects users to applications and data through encrypted and authenticated SSL connections. Available only on Platinum edition.

Application Streaming

Sends all the executables, DLLs and other files required to run the application to the client and stores them on the local hard drive. The application can then execute locally instead of on the server. Using this feature applications can be either published for remote display (that is, run as thin clients) or streamed to the client - the user no longer needs to have two versions of the same application.

Native Application Packaging and Delivery

Standardizes installation or upgrades of applications using a Citrix interface. Came out originally in 4.0 under a different name, now called the Application-Streaming Profiler.

CPU Utilization and Virtual Memory Optimization

Smooths out processor spikes by individual users by allocating equal CPU shares to all users. Also releases DLLs and frees up memory wherever possible. Available only on Enterprise and Platinum versions.

Application Isolation Environments

Enables multiple versions of the same application to run on the same server. Also runs applications that have DLL conflicts or require hard-coded IP address. Available only on Enterprise and Platinum versions.



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