

Desktop virtualization vendor RingCube still has its Mojo

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Sector: Enterprise Software

Event summary

- RingCube's MojoPac for workspace virtualization is a 40MB layer that isolates the underlying operating system from the user environment. With it, contract employees and other road warriors can run locked-down corporate PCs on their personal machines.
- MojoPac comes in three flavors. MojoDrive runs on a USB stick. MojoStation can be provisioned to any Windows PC. MojoNet lives on networked storage and can be accessed via the LAN or WAN. All three can be managed from a central server.
- Administrators can create a master workspace, install applications and publish the whole package to the administration server. Active Directory controls users and groups. Users log into the client portal to install and activate a MojoPac instance.

The 451 take

Client-hosted desktop virtualization gets more and more interesting by the day. It's a great way to isolate critical business applications from vulnerable and roaming end-point devices. Little wonder entrepreneurs are flocking to the model. RingCube's PC gaming background is no disgrace in a market where application virtualization vendors Softricity and AppStream came from games to the utmost enterprise respectability. Our favorite aspect of the RingCube model, though, is its tri-modal delivery, offering a choice of USB stick, desktop PC or network storage server.

Details

Founded in 2005, **RingCube Technologies** is based in Santa Clara, California. **New Enterprise Associates** and **Mohr Davidow Ventures** have invested \$16m in the company. The work force is at 45 employees, down modestly from 50 at the end of last year. The company claims 130,000 registered users, which is not as surprising as it looks, given that early iterations targeted the gaming market. There's a new executive team headed by Pete Foley, late of **PortAuthority Technologies** and **Infoblox**.

RingCube executives point out that the line between personal and professional computing has blurred. This creates problems for organizations that need to keep business applications separate from personal applications, critical from noncritical and supported from unsupported.

MojoPac is purpose-built for the desktop. It includes the entire user workspace, so it works better on a physical desktop than a thin client or smartphone. At the same time, it's reasonably lightweight and doesn't require another OS or third-party hypervisor, thus keeping license costs down. The three modes offer flexible deployment options. You get encryption and revocation for security effectively for free. And that 130,000-strong user base should give enterprises confidence that the software is field-tested – even if they are gamers.

Competitive landscape

In RingCube's view, every other virtualization model requires expensive trade-offs. Application virtualization models like **Microsoft** SoftGrid and **VMware** ThinApp are hard to deploy. OS-hosted local desktop hypervisors like Microsoft Virtual PC, **Parallels** and VMware Workstation exact a not-insubstantial performance hit. Shared remote applications like **Citrix** XenApp or Microsoft Windows Terminal Services raise licensing and support costs as well as datacenter footprint, power use and cooling. The VMware Virtual Desktop Infrastructure or Citrix XenDesktop server-hosted desktop virtualization approaches have many of the same issues.

That's all true enough, but RingCube is likely to find itself competing with the other client-side lockdown plays – **DeviceVM**, Microsoft **Kidaro**, **Neocleus**, **Phoenix Technologies**, **Secure Command**, **Sentillion** and VMware ACE (Assured Computing Environment). DeviceVM, Neocleus and Phoenix all use bare-metal hypervisor technology, so they're not exact analogues. (In our view, it should be said, bare-metal may be a stronger approach for securing and managing the end point.) But Kidaro, Sentillion and ACE all have OS-hosted, client-side virtualization models that are very similar to RingCube. They may not have the flexibility of the three-mode delivery, but adding this is not beyond their capacities.

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