

NERDIO MANAGER FOR MSP

Why MSPs should move to Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop from Citrix





Many modern managed service providers (MSPs) are turning to Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) as a scalable solution to future-proof their virtual desktop strategy. Faced with unsustainable Citrix cost increases and lessened support availability, MSPs are feeling pressure to switch despite staff hesitance due to unfamiliarity with AVD. This guide explores the challenges and benefits, making the business case for AVD in conjunction with Nerdio as the optimal solution to challenges faced by MSPs using Citrix.



The challenges MSPs face with Citrix deployments

While a dominant player in desktop virtualization, Citrix has gone through recent changes, such as an acquisition, updates to its licensing model and costs, and restructuring of its partner programs. These factors and many others present several challenges for MSPs, leading many to reconsider their options. centralized servers can pose security risks, necessitating additional redundancy measures.

Increasing costs

Citrix's extensive functionality often translates to higher costs. Licensing, support, and infrastructure expenses have risen, making it difficult for MSPs to maintain profitability, and the flexible monthly model of Citrix introduces business uncertainty. MSPs need a predictable and reliable pricing structure to manage their operations effectively. These increases make Azure Virtual Desktop more attractive and cost-effective.

Complexity

Citrix deployments, while robust, present a landscape riddled with complexities that necessitate considerable resources for management. The intricate nature of Citrix's architecture increases not only the initial deployment time but also demands a higher level of expertise for continuous management. This complexity stems from its legacy in a pre-cloud era, requiring more components and stricter integration requirements with existing IT environments.

Security risks

Several security issues with Citrix networking devices have raised concerns. The platform's reliance on centralized servers can pose security risks, necessitating additional redundancy measures. Furthermore, if customers aren't using Citrix Cloud and instead are still hosting their own NetScalers, they have been exposed to constant zero-day vulnerabilities. When users don't upgrade in time, that opens their environments up to bad actors. The frequency of these common vulnerabilities and exposures (CVEs) for Citrix Netscalers is too much for organizations to keep up with.

The better MSP DaaS solution: Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop

Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop offers a compelling alternative, addressing many of the pain points associated with Citrix. Here are the key benefits that make AVD a superior choice for MSPs:

Affordability

AVD's pay-per-use pricing model eliminates capital expenditures (CAPEX) and significantly reduces operational expenses (OPEX), making it a cost-effective solution for MSPs. By only paying for what is used, MSPs can optimize spending and improve their margins. Additionally, AVD integrates seamlessly with existing Microsoft licensing, providing further cost savings. The entitlement to use AVD is already included in M365 Business Premium or higher SKUs, so many organizations are already paying for it.

Accessibility and agility

AVD provides a secure foundation for desktop infrastructure with global accessibility, ensuring that resources are available where needed without geographical constraints. Azure Virtual Desktops can be deployed in all public Azure Regions, including GovCloud, sovereign nation clouds like Azure China, and 60+ other regions across the globe.

The flexibility of AVD allows MSPs to quickly adapt to changing business requirements, whether scaling up during peak times or scaling down when demand decreases. This agility ensures that MSPs can meet client needs efficiently and effectively.

Security

Azure Virtual Desktop offers robust security features, including data control, access restrictions, and built-in redundancy measures. These features help mitigate downtime and enhance overall security. With advanced threat protection, multi-factor authentication, and compliance with industry standards, AVD ensures that sensitive data is protected. Additionally, the integration with Azure Security Center provides continuous monitoring and threat detection, giving MSPs peace of mind. Special hardened images can also be used for these virtual desktops, which come out of the box locked down based on CIS Benchmarks for Windows Desktops.

Scalability

AVD allows MSPs to scale their operations efficiently, accommodating business growth and fluctuating demands without significant overhead. With the ability to quickly provision new virtual desktops and applications, MSPs can support clients of any size, from small businesses to large enterprises. The scalability of AVD also means that MSPs can easily expand their service offerings, adding new clients and services without worrying about infrastructure limitations.

Gartner MQ leadership

Microsoft AVD is recognized as a leading DaaS solution by Gartner, affirming its viability and innovation in the virtual desktop space. This recognition is a testament to Microsoft's commitment to continuous improvement and customer satisfaction. By choosing AVD, MSPs align themselves with a market leader, ensuring access to the latest advancements in virtualization technology.

Making the case for Azure Virtual Desktop

When considering a switch to Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop with Nerdio, MSPs often have several key questions regarding the impact on their operations, costs, and user experience. Addressing these concerns can help you make informed decisions and understand the benefits of transitioning to AVD.

Top 6 questions from MSPs about AVD

1. How will a move to AVD change my deployment and identity management for my tenants?

Switching to AVD can streamline deployment and identity management processes. With Nerdio, MSPs can leverage automated tools to simplify these tasks, ensuring a smooth transition and efficient ongoing management.

Deployment improvements

- **Automated deployment:** AVD allows for automated deployment of virtual desktops, reducing the time and effort required to set up environments.
- **Template-based provisioning:** MSPs can create and use templates for quick and consistent provisioning of desktops, ensuring standardized setups across different tenants.
- **Multimedia redirection and offloading:** Like Citrix, AVD now includes features like Teams and Zoom offloading and multimedia redirection. This enhancement ensures better performance and user experience for video conferencing and multimedia applications.

Identity management enhancements

- **Entra ID integration:** AVD integrates seamlessly with Entra ID (formerly Azure Active Directory), simplifying identity management and providing single sign-on (SSO) capabilities.
- **Role-Based Access Control (RBAC):** MSPs can leverage RBAC to manage permissions and access levels, ensuring secure and efficient access management for different users.
- **Conditional access policies:** AVD supports conditional access policies, allowing MSPs to enforce security measures based on user location, device compliance, and other factors.

2. Will the complexity increase?

Not at all—in fact, AVD with Nerdio reduces complexity. Nerdio's comprehensive management tools simplify configuration, deployment, and maintenance, making the overall process more straightforward compared to Citrix.

Simplified management

- **Centralized console:** Nerdio provides a centralized management console that offers visibility and control over all AVD deployments, streamlining administrative tasks.
- **Automation tools:** Nerdio's automation tools handle routine tasks such as scaling, backups, and updates, reducing the manual effort required.

Single-session vs. multi-session

- **Transition to multi-session:** MSPs planning to use Windows 10/11 multi-session must use Azure Virtual Desktop or Azure Local (formerly Azure Stack HCI). It is not possible with an on-premises solution. Nerdio offers guidance and best practices to help users transition from single to multi-session.
- **Cost savings:** Multi-session environments can offer significant cost savings by maximizing resource utilization. Nerdio's cost optimization features ensure efficient use of resources, further enhancing savings.
- **User experience:** MSPs may be concerned about the impact on users who are accustomed to 1:1 desktops. Properly configured multi-session environments can provide a comparable user experience without negative impacts.

User-friendly interface

- **Intuitive dashboards:** Nerdio's dashboards present key metrics and insights in an easy-to-understand format, helping MSPs make informed decisions.
- **Guided configuration:** Step-by-step guides and wizards assist MSPs in configuring and managing their AVD environments, minimizing the learning curve.

3. Does the move make it more cost-effective to manage Daas?

Yes, AVD helps eliminate costs associated with Citrix licensing. The pay-per-use model and Nerdio's cost optimization features ensure MSPs only pay for the resources they use.

Elimination of redundant licensing: Moving to AVD allows MSPs to eliminate the costs associated with Citrix licensing, consolidating their expenses under a single, more affordable platform.

Additionally, Nerdio's Auto-Scaling feature dynamically adjusts resource allocation based on demand, ensuring optimal usage and minimizing waste. It also provides real-time visibility into resource usage and costs, allowing MSPs to monitor and control expenses effectively. In fact, for most customers, the amount of Azure consumption saved by using Nerdio makes up for the cost of the Nerdio licenses in just one week, giving you three weeks in the rest of the month for total cost of ownership savings.

4. Will the user experience be equally as good as with Citrix?

Absolutely. AVD, when properly configured, delivers a user experience on par with Citrix, and Nerdio enhances this by streamlining management and optimizing performance. AVD supports GPU acceleration, multimedia redirection, and high-resolution displays, ensuring a responsive and immersive user experience. Users can access their virtual desktops from any device, anywhere, ensuring flexibility and convenience. Advancements in Teams, Zoom, and Webex mean that using these applications in a VDI is virtually the same as using them on physical devices. A lot of VDI research and development has gone into these collaboration tools to make the user experience identical to using them on physical devices.

Tools and support

Nerdio further enhances the experience by providing tools and guidelines to ensure that AVD environments are configured for optimal performance and reliability. Continuous monitoring tools track performance metrics and alert MSPs to potential issues, ensuring a consistently high-quality user experience.

Transitioning to a multi-session OS environment allows multiple users to share the same virtual machine, maximizing resource utilization and reducing costs without compromising performance. Nerdio provides support and best practices to help users adapt to a multi-session OS environment, ensuring a smooth transition from 1:1 desktops.

Automation

Nerdio automates the creation and management of images, ensuring that updates and patches are applied consistently and efficiently across all virtual desktops. Automated session host lifecycle management handles the scaling of resources based on demand, reducing the time and effort required for routine maintenance tasks. Additionally, automated storage management optimizes the allocation and use of storage resources, further contributing to cost savings and performance improvements.

Nerdio bolsters the capabilities of AVD management beyond what is available in the native Azure portal, providing advanced tools and automation features that simplify management and enhance performance.

Additionally, your current RMM, EDR, and Security Stack will continue to work the same way it does on-premises, and Nerdio even has automation around helping you install/uninstall those agent-based tools on VM creation to help manage the lifecycle and licensing for your MSP tools.

5. How will this affect my IT Ops?

AVD simplifies IT operations by reducing the need for on-premises hardware and software management. This saves time and streamlines IT management, allowing staff to focus on more strategic initiatives.

Operational efficiency

By shifting to a cloud-based solution, MSPs can reduce the time and effort spent on managing physical hardware and software. There's no need for an experienced cloud infrastructure engineer—level one techs can easily manage Azure Virtual Desktop environments with Nerdio. Plus, Nerdio's centralized console simplifies the management of multiple AVD deployments, providing a unified view and control over the entire environment.

Focus on strategic initiatives

With routine tasks automated and simplified, IT staff can focus on more strategic projects such as security enhancements, process improvements, and innovation. The streamlined management and enhanced performance of AVD enable MSPs to deliver better service to their clients, improving satisfaction and retention.

6. How does this affect my business, especially margins?

AVD with Nerdio can improve margins by lowering costs and reducing resource needs. The pay-per-use model and elimination of redundant licensing with AVD lower overall operating costs, improving profit margins. Nerdio's Auto-Scaling and cost optimization features ensure efficient resource use, further reducing expenses.

Nerdio cost saving strategies

Additionally, the scalability of AVD enables MSPs to expand their service offerings and take on more clients without significant infrastructure investment. The improved performance and streamlined management of AVD with Nerdio enhance client satisfaction, increasing the likelihood of repeat business and referrals. Most of our MSP partners make a margin of at least 30% to 70% every single month by moving their customers to Azure while staying competitive in their markets.

Cost Reduction Strategies for Azure Virtual Desktop						
	AZURE COMPONENT COSTS			Monthly Total	Per-User Cost	% Savings
	Compute (VMs)	OS Disks (Storage)	FSLogix (Storage)			
Unoptimized	\$4,038	\$215	\$737	\$4,991	\$25.99	N/A
#1: VM Power Management	\$1,202	\$215	\$737	\$2,154	\$11.22	57%
#2: Just-in-time Provisioning (50% Burst)	\$1,202	\$140	\$737	\$2,079	\$10.83	58%
#3: 3-year Reserved Instances	\$457	\$140	\$737	\$1,333	\$6.94	73%
#4: OS Disks Auto-scale	\$457	\$89	\$737	\$1,283	\$6.68	74%
#5: OS Disks Shrink to 64 GB	\$457	\$46	\$737	\$1,240	\$6.46	75%
#6: FSLogix Shrink by 50%	\$457	\$46	\$369	\$871	\$4.54	83%
Assumptions · Number of users: 192 · User types: Heavy (2 users per vCPU) · Session host VM size: D8s_v4 · OS disk: P10 (128 GB G8 Premium SSD)				· FSLogix profile size: 20GB · FSLogix storage: Azure Files Premium · Hours in work week: 50 · Azure list pricing: South Central US		TOTAL SAVINGS 83%

Why AVD with Nerdio is the most viable alternative to Citrix

The business case for switching to AVD with Nerdio is compelling. It offers a cost-effective, scalable, and secure solution that addresses the challenges MSPs face with Citrix.

AVD with Nerdio provides MSPs with a modern, efficient, and cost-effective alternative to Citrix, making it the ideal choice for future-proofing their virtual desktop strategy.

It's less expensive

AVD combined with Nerdio offers a lower-cost solution compared to Citrix. Nerdio helps MSPs maximize margins with competitive pricing, on average 30% less than what organizations pay with Citrix.

It's fit for purpose

Microsoft's continuous innovation in virtualization, coupled with Nerdio's tailored tools, ensures that AVD meets the evolving needs of MSPs. Citrix support post-Tibco acquisition leaves a lot to be desired, especially support for non-premier partners. With roots in the MSP space, Nerdio is better equipped to provide the strong support that MSPs need to stay ahead of the pack.

It's simple

Nerdio's user-friendly management tools make adopting, configuring, and managing AVD straightforward and efficient. This simplicity addresses a key concern for MSPs looking to make the switch from Citrix.



About Nerdio

Nerdio is a leading provider of powerful, simplified cloud management solutions for businesses of all sizes. Trusted by managed service providers (MSPs) and enterprise IT departments alike, Nerdio equips organizations with seamless, cost-effective management tools for Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD), Windows 365, and comprehensive Modern Work solutions.

With thousands of customers worldwide, Nerdio accelerates cloud adoption, enabling companies to thrive in an era of hybrid work by providing modern, future-proof technology that adapts to evolving workplace needs.

For more information, please visit www.getnerdio.com.