

View Point



Windows Server 2008 R2 and Windows 7

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"If people want to wait, they really can" ... Steve Ballmer,

On Windows 7, while speaking at the final keynote at the Gartner Symposium IT Expo in Orlando in October 2008

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Introduction

Release of simultaneous versions of Server and Desktop Operating System is not new to Microsoft. Early in the 90's, Microsoft released Windows NT 3.5 Server and also Windows NT 3.5 Workstation. This trend of twin release continued for a while, until Windows XP arrived in the market place, in the early 2000's. The technology requirements were redefined as an impact of Y2K and strategically thereon, Microsoft OS releases were based on technology features and advances.

Organizations need stable and complementing technologies at both the Server and Desktop levels. Though not exactly Client-Server architecture, a combination of complementing / supporting features at both the ends helps to deliver better technology stability and actually use technology as a driver to boost business productivity.

With that view, Windows 7 and Windows 2008 looks a perfect combination of a Desktop and Server OS respectively. Both these products have complementing features, which when implemented properly will lead to a maximization of business benefits.

The “together” features

It increasingly looks like both Windows 7 and Windows 2008 R2 was developed for each other. Windows Server 2008 R2 has many features that are designed specifically to work with client computers running Windows 7. Configured to work together, these 2 deliver better, more secure and more robust computing and enhances both the end user and the IT Administrator's experience. There are some few new features which can be leveraged only if both work together.

Direct Access

- Helps Mobile Users to establish a secure remote connection to the corporate network without requiring VPN
- Remote devices can be managed with just being connected using DA
- Patch Management and Security updates, hitherto needed physical connection to the LAN is a thing of past

Bit Locker – a bit better

- Win7 and Server 2008 R2 has been enhanced to encrypt removable drives (read as USB devices) and non-system partitions
- Though it can work individually (on Win7 without 2008 Server), can be enforced on clients using a GPO
- Recovery key can be stored in the AD

Branch Cache – caching in a box

- Often needed content is “cached” locally within a branch office, freeing the network bandwidth thereby increasing the performance
- Comes in 2 flavors – hosted cache and distributed cache, determining the way, it is implemented
- Along with Read Only DFS Replicas, improve the branch office security and performance considerably

Presentation Virtualization – Improved, Virtually!

- App Locker (new incarnation of the erstwhile SRP) allows more control on which application to run on the desktop and which cannot. What more, they can be policy driven and enforced through the GPO. (Server 2008 R2 has been enhanced to support this
- RAD Feeds helps end users to launch applications on the Windows 2008 R2 server from a Win 7 Desktop (thanks to RDP 7)
- Enhances User experience, for running the virtual applications as if it runs on a local desktop

And a lot more...

Though Windows Server 2008 R2 and Windows 7 are individual products and can run with other versions of OS, they both share the same OS Core. The features of both the OS have been designed keeping in view of an “integrated” user experience. And both these are major versions (and not just an upgrade from the previous versions). Many improvements / enhancements which we have been hearing about Win 7 are also there in 2008 R2.

So are you ready to upgrade?

Though 2008 R2 definitely has many touting features, it needs to be seen as how successful it is. While there are no doubts that the new features associated with Server 2008 R2 and more importantly the “integration with Win7” will be the key USPs to upgrade to 2008 R2, the key success will depend on how reliable is Windows Server 2008 R2 over a long run.

While organizations are eagerly awaiting the release of these 2 products, more eyes will be on Win 7, especially with the issues associated with Vista. While Win 7 is expected to be a panacea of all Vista issues, it is also expected to give a stable Desktop OS since Windows XP was launched in early 2000, It is recommended that enterprise customers who are on the verge of undertaking a OS refresh, to go in for Win 7 against Vista. And given the fact that Windows 7 was remarkably stable in the Beta, it is only natural for IT honchos to go in for Win 7.

What about Server 2008? An equally awaited product, 2008 R2 is expected to reduce the gap between Microsoft and VMware, on the Virtualization market, amongst the other features. A recent report by Gartner projected that Microsoft's share of installed virtual machine software would increase to 29 percent by the end of 2012, from 8 percent at the end of last year. Though the urgency of upgrading to 2008 R2 might not exist with many organizations, who would actually like to see the technology stabilized in a while, it is not worth giving it a slip as well.

Also it will be quite interesting to see, how Microsoft positions these 2 products against the Linux wave, which offers a heady mix of Desktop & Server OS version plus an inbuilt Virtualization feature, similar to that offered by 2008 R2

Happy days ahead... uh?

About the Author

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