

Licensing Microsoft Applications in a Citrix Environment

By Julie Machal-Fulks

Many organizations allow their users to access desktop applications like Microsoft Office through Citrix, which is often used to control the number of users who can access the software at any one time. These organizations need to carefully evaluate whether they are legally able to install applications on their network for remote-user access and also need to evaluate how many application licenses are required to ensure that all such access through Citrix is proper.

If a company wants to install its Microsoft applications on a network or server for its employees to access from devices owned by the company, it generally must purchase volume licenses for the applications. Retail and OEM license terms for Microsoft products released after 2007 do not allow for network use. The only exception to this rule occurs when the company buys Software Assurance for OEM licenses under an existing volume license agreement within 90 days of purchase of those licenses. In that instance, the devices can access application software installed on a network.

However, it is important to note that each device able to access the network-deployed application needs a license for that software. In other words, if Citrix limits concurrent sessions to 25, but there are 50 desktop devices in the organization, the organization must have 50 application licenses. If a device is properly licensed for network access to a desktop application, it can access the application either through the network or locally on the desktop, provided that the user does not concurrently access the software both locally and through the network.

In addition, in some instances, employees may need to connect to the application server remotely from a device not owned by their employer. For instance, an auditor may need to access the server at an accounting firm while working from a client's computer. Unfortunately, unless the employer has Software Assurance on its volume licenses, the employer must buy a separate license for that device. The July 2011 Product Use Rights allow limited access from qualified, third-party devices without the need for additional licenses only when the organization subscribes to Software Assurance.

Licensing Microsoft applications for networked use can be a complex undertaking. In many cases, business owners will benefit greatly from the input of knowledgeable licensing counsel.



About the author Julie Machal-Fulks:

As a partner at Scott & Scott, LLP, Julie Machal-Fulks leads a team of attorneys in representing and defending clients in legal matters relating to information technology. Her practice focuses on complex litigation ranging from privacy and network security, data breach notification and crisis management, intellectual property disputes, service provider negligence claims, and content-based injuries such as copyright and trademark infringement in software, the Internet, and all forms of tangible media.

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