

Easier Remote Access

“Is there an easier way to have remote access to your office while at home or on holidays and still be secure?”

This is a question we are often asked. We all know that offering remote access for your team members definitely provides benefits to the business and ultimately, the clients. Having secure remote access is not difficult to accomplish, but where the challenge lies is in *having secure remote access from anywhere you can browse the Internet.*

With Citrix and/or Microsoft Terminal Services you can remotely provide access to the same tools that are available to you at the office. The typical route for delivering this access requires a Firewall in place and the VPN (Virtual Private Network) client locally installed and configured on the PC or notebook that requires remote access. The process to connect remotely would be to launch the VPN client, which establishes the secure encrypted connection to your Firewall via the Internet, and from there you would launch the Citrix or Microsoft RDP (Remote Desktop Protocol) client to have access to your applications.

This is a good secure solution. But it has some limitations when you would like to connect remotely from a different PC or notebook that does not have the VPN client installed and configured, or if you would like to have more control over what applications or files are accessible remotely.

The good news is that there are different affordable solutions available that eliminate these limitations. Cisco, Citrix and SonicWall, are some of the vendors that have VPN appliances that offer SSL VPN Clientless remote access.

“What does that mean?”

It means that as long as you can access the Internet, you can have secure remote access, without needing to install and configure a VPN client. The VPN appliance simplifies the process – all you do is type your remote access address in the browser address field, hit enter and the VPN appliance launches a login screen. Behind the scenes, the appliance is encrypting your login credentials and establishing the secure VPN client connection via the Internet Browser. You will be prompted to install an agent when you first connect, but no configuration will be required. Once you have logged in, a personalized web portal launches in the Internet Browser with the applications that you are authorized to access.

If your only requirement is to have access to remote email this can be accomplished with Microsoft's Outlook Web Access client (OWA) configured on Exchange Server 2003. Citrix and/or Terminal Services are not required and you should be aware that there are different levels of security that can be deployed.

The pricing varies amongst the different vendors and typically by the number of concurrent users you require to remotely connect.

Whatever you choose to do, keep in mind that network security has many different layers and that it is an on-going process of reviewing, monitoring and improving to ensure that access to your data is secure.

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