

# Network Computing

For IT By IT

9.22.2005 | WWW.NWC.COM

## Sneak PREVIEWS

### » Citrix Systems Does Lite Right

Remote access the easy way with Access Essentials 1.0 BY MICHAEL FUDGE JR.

good

- Easy to deploy and set up
- Terminal Services CALs included in the price
- Many of the same features of Citrix Presentation Server 4.0

bad

- Only runs on Windows 2003 platform and publishes Windows applications
- 75-user limit per server
- Needs a simplified facility to check for and deploy security patches and updates

**R**emote access technologies, such as Citrix Presentation Server (CPS), have long been the stuff of big kid IT shops. They have the staff, budget and infrastructure to deploy server-centric solutions, while small businesses can only dream about such programs. Enter Citrix Access Essentials (CAE). Designed exclusively for small and midsize businesses, this product promises the power of CPS without overworking your staff or busting your bankroll.

CPS lets client devices interact with applications running remotely on servers at the main office. To the end user, it appears as if the application is running locally. Citrix CPS supports multiple operating systems, which means a Unix application can be published to a Windows

client, and vice versa. Citrix CAE may best be described as a scaled-down version of CPS 4.0. I'm often disappointed by "lite" versions of products, but CAE is "lite done right."

#### Scaled-Down Capabilities

Many of the features that have made Citrix the leader in server-centric computing remain intact, including SpeedScreen technology, audio support, secure access over the Web, support for non-Windows clients and user policies for advanced deployments. Features not included in CAE are those needed for multiserver implementations, such as clustering, load balancing, and advanced monitoring and reporting. In addition, CAE supports only up to 75 users per server and runs solely on Windows.

You won't be able to publish any Unix or Linux applications to your clients as you can with CPS. The software requires Windows 2003, which may be a problem for some small companies that haven't yet moved to that OS. As a plus, how-

ever, by supporting just Windows, Citrix was able to bundle the required Terminal Services Client Access Licenses (TS CALs) into CAE, saving you the headache of setting it up, and saving you some cash to boot.

For my tests, I set up a fictitious small business, FudgeCo, in our Real-World Labs® at Syracuse University. The FudgeCo LAN runs Windows 2003 Active Directory, with NAT firewall access to the Internet. This configuration would let me evaluate access to CAE-published apps from inside the trusted network and over SSL from outside the corporate firewall.



I installed CAE on a 2-GHz Pentium 4 with 512 MB of RAM. It was running Windows 2003 as a member server in the FudgeCo Active Directory Domain, and had Office 2003 and Mozilla Firefox, as well as some more obscure applications, such as GIMP 2 and ASP.Net Web Matrix.

## Easy Install

With install of the CAE server, components of the required Windows 2003 server, such as Terminal Services and IIS, were automatically configured. It was a relief to know I didn't need expertise with these components to get the app running.

CAE's Quick Start made it easy to get the server licensed, activate Windows Terminal Services, publish applications to users and set up SSL access from outside my FudgeCo LAN. The application publisher step automatically detected most of the applications I preinstalled, but for the few it did not recognize, a facility browsed for the executable file. The remote-access portion of the Quick Start program guides you through requesting and installing your SSL certificate, and then automatically configures IIS to use SSL when accessing your published applications from outside the LAN. Installation and configuration took

just under two hours.

From a Windows XP workstation on the FudgeCo LAN, I opened Internet Explorer, went to the CAE URL, logged in with an Active Directory User account and launched Microsoft Word without a hitch. However, I failed to get my test to work from an XP workstation from the secure access side outside my firewall. After checking my settings and retracing my steps, I realized I forgot to set port-forwarding on my NAT. Once I fixed this, things hummed along.

## Small-Biz Tests

I tested three common small-business functions: restricting access to published applications by Active Directory group—done from within the Quick Start app; customizing the CAE Web pages; and enforcing corporate policies, such as disabling printing access from outside the firewall. The last two tasks required classic tools from CPS.

These CPS tools—Administrator and Server management console—are difficult for the average user to learn. Citrix could have made things easier by adding more wizards to the Quick Start to assist beginners with complicated deployments, such as those which must be done using policies.

I completed my second task and customized the look and feel of both my internal and external Web sites easily from the Web interface configuration tool found in CPS Administrator.

For the third and most difficult task, I had to employ the Server Management Console. This tool lets you control and manage all aspects of the remote-display deployment. To restrict print capabilities for clients from outside the FudgeCo LAN, I had to use policies. Policies can be kludgy, and I strongly suggest you test them thoroughly before deploying them. It took me about a half-dozen trials before I had my policy configured the way I intended.

One criticism: I couldn't find links or menu items in any of the CAE administrative applications pointing to the Citrix Web site for downloading patches, hot fixes and security updates—a problem for understaffed businesses.

■ **CITRIX ACCESS ESSENTIALS 1.0**, \$249 per seat, (800) 424-8749, (954) 267-3000. [www.citrix.com/accessessentials](http://www.citrix.com/accessessentials)

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