

## Tranxition LiveManage automates migration for desktops in transition

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Upgrading desktops is hard. Users want the new OS and applications, but they want their old settings and documents to survive the transition unscathed. This is precisely what **Tranxition's** LiveManage was created to ensure. Now that desktop administrators are looking at migrating not to new physical but to virtual environments, the ability to decouple user data from OS and application underpinnings may become even more critical to the migration's success.

### The 451 Take

The company identifies the difficulty of managing desktops as its opportunity. Its focus is on the desktop 'personality,' a term that includes metadata, application customizations, custom dictionaries, connections, templates, layouts, data files, keyboard mapping and so on. This notion of a desktop personality is, if not identical with what The 451 Group is calling user virtualization in the desktop-virtualization market, certainly close enough for government work. That's important because government agencies are a primary target for Tranxition (see below). The company sees fertile ground wherever organizations are trying to cut the costs of desktop management while maintaining user experience.

### Context

Beaverton, Oregon-based Tranxition was launched in 2000, and its flagship product, LiveManage, is now in its seventh generation. Customers include **Kaiser Permanente**, the **Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)** and **United Airlines**; deployments span the spectrum from a few hundred to over 100,000 desktops. The company has always pursued partnerships, and its technology is integrated with desktop management suites from **BMC Software**, **FrontRange Solutions**, **Hewlett-Packard** and **Scalable Software**. Relationships with systems integrators are very important to Tranxition, especially as it works with government agencies.

### Technology

The company has four products. First is LiveManage, designed to help desktop administrators preserve desktops for backup purposes or through migrations to a new operating system, application or hardware. LiveManage for Services provides one-time migration. Launched in April 2009, LiveManage for Virtual Migrations adds the capability to

port existing desktops into virtual machines. Finally, Transition Migration Studio lets buyers customize the other three products to their organization's particular needs.

Transition, like everyone else in the business, is particularly focused on virtual desktops right now. When IT organizations look into desktop virtualization, it's for clearly defined reasons: to cut costs, simplify management and improve mobility, compliance and security – all without antagonizing the end-user community. The complexity of existing products for desktop virtualization can undermine every one of those ends. Hidden licensing, network and storage costs can take a big bite out of ROI. Another layer of abstraction can complicate management and security. Worst of all, though, the inability to maintain stateful user data can prevent a seamless transition from a physical to a virtual desktop. If the end user can tell the difference, the deployment was a failure.

User data can be maintained in several ways. Desktop administrators could gather metadata and settings manually – had they but world enough and time. They don't. An alternative is to migrate each user's entire image into a virtual PC. Early desktop-virtualization deployments did exactly this. The one-to-one mapping between a virtual PC and a user was enormously wasteful of server and storage resources and led to the rise of the desktop connection broker and virtual PCs that are dynamically assembled per session.

If the OS and applications are disposable, as in this model, it's necessary to abstract away the personality and store it elsewhere. This is what Transition LiveManage for Virtual Migrations is designed to do. Administrators should be able to deploy an agent to every PC using their existing tools. LiveManage then extracts and preserves personalities, deploys standardized virtual images – again, with the existing tools – and injects personalities into those standard images.

The company claims the product can cut migration costs by a factor of ten. Perhaps even more important, by making the virtual PC look and feel exactly like their hand-tooled physical workspace, LiveManage for Virtual Migrations should boost user acceptance and make people more productive right from the start of a desktop-virtualization project.

Still to come: the ability to continuously mesh changes to user environments – in real time. This, to Transition, is critical to achieving the ultimate goal: a floating desktop personality that follows a user wherever they go.

## Customers

Transition partner **Wyle Information Systems** manages 1,000 Windows desktops for DARPA. Transition's implementation team worked with Wyle to automate processes for user migration and disaster recovery. Technicians use **Microsoft** Systems Management Server to deliver the migration agent. Extractions and injections are scheduled outside business hours – so they don't affect network bandwidth while people are trying to work.

The company has a similar arrangement with **Titan Corporation**, part of **L-3 Communications** and the prime contractor to the **US Army's** Information Management Support Center. Titan upgraded 9,000 users to Windows XP, Office XP and custom

applications. Tranxition helped create a batch file that automatically extracts user personalities for injection into a new machine or stored image.

**ITG** is Tranxition's partner in a third government agency, the **Defense Contract Management Agency**. ITG won a contract to upgrade and standardize 8,500 PCs to Windows XP and Office XP. Tranxition helped ITG develop a secure process whereby a single technician could upgrade 25 PCs per day. ITG has since developed its own branded migration service based on Tranxition technology.

## Competition

Tranxition executives split the competitive market three ways. First up is the status quo, in which user environment is hopelessly entangled with the rest of the desktop. As we have seen, this model makes upgrades and backup complicated and slow. A second model is user environment abstracted from the desktop. This describes everything from the very basic approach of something like Microsoft Windows Local and Roaming Profiles to much more sophisticated products from the likes of **AppSense, Atlantis Computing, RES Software, RTO Software, Scense, Script Start, SlickAccess, triCerat, UniDesk** and **visionapp**. With its forthcoming release, capable of real-time meshing of changes, Tranxition believes it will create a third, and ultimately triumphant, model.

User virtualization is the topic of a forthcoming 451 ICE report.

## SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
You can't argue with ten years of experience around an emerging market, nor with a track record that includes success inside such demanding organizations as DARPA and the Army.	For all its experience, Tranxition is far less well-known in user virtualization than many – perhaps most – of its pure-play competitors.
Opportunities	Threats
The 451 Group remains bullish about the promise of desktop virtualization, which, after an early stumble in investment banks, is now doing well in healthcare, education and government agencies.	Desktop virtualization is the battleground between Citrix and VMware; Microsoft has added a connection broker to its portfolio as well. As that rivalry climbs the management stack, sophisticated user virtualization will be built into the products from the big vendors. Pure plays will have to scramble to stay ahead.

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