



VM Management For The Masses

http://www.informationweek.com/blog/main/archives/2008/08/vm_management_f.html

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Traditional enterprise management tools are targeted, at, well, enterprises. Empirum from Matrix42 is looking to shake that model up, targeting shops with 500 to 5,000 devices at a reasonable price point.

I spoke with reps from Germany-based Matrix42 a little while back. Their pitch: medium-sized shops should get to play with enterprise management tools, too. At \$80 per device, Empirum manages traditional OS, application, and ESX environments. Eighty bucks buys a license for any device, be it server, VM host, virtual server, traditional desktop, or VDI instance.

Matrix has a 10-plus year history in systems configuration management. It is (like everyone) new to virtualized environments. The company entered into VM management based on current customers' requests. Empirum's VM functionality was developed hand-in-hand with real-world customers to address the needs of medium-sized organizations. A typical customer has a primary location with a small data center supporting multiple non-IT-staffed branch offices. Sound familiar to anyone out there?

Workflow is straightforward via a Web management console; install an agent on the target box, then Empirum does a full, native build with dynamic hardware detection, box-specific drivers, and add-ons as required per spec. No imaging is required. This bare-metal-up strategy gets around persnickety bios and raid driver issues that may haunt a smaller organization -- especially for shops which acquire hardware via a, shall we say, ad hoc model rather than an approved corporate buy list.

Remote offices with limited IT support can plug in a box, load the agent, and rely on headquarters to finish the config over the WAN. Matrix42 has an A-list of European customers, including ING, BMW, AIG, and a number of other euro-acronyms.

Pricing is simple -- \$80/device, typical minimum orders are in the 25 client range, plus an annual 18% service contract for continued support. Locking in a multiyear, bundled training and support contract will bring the annual fee down to 15%.

Supported OSes are as expected: Windows 95 through Win2k8 and Vista, as VMs and physical boxes, as well as flavors of Linux -- Red Hat preferred. Operating system updates can be delivered via the tool, while the next release (planned for 3Q '09) will incorporate third-party patch-management tools.

Virtualization platform support is limited to VMware ESX 3.x and VDI at the moment. Hyper-V support is under evaluation, and Xen and KVM integration are on the drawing board in Frankfurt.

Matrix42 has a 20-person U.S. presence in Atlanta.