



CONSTRUCTOR BY REMOTE ACCESS

SUMMARY

As we beaver away at a re-architected /redesigned version of Constructor which will lead us towards mobile and web based offering in the future (but that's a story for another day) let's clear up some ideas around remote access to your Constructor program and for that matter any software you're running on your office network.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Mobile apps and web based system are indeed powerful and extremely convenient. They do rely on a significant shift in the structure of your systems and the way in which you piece together your I.T. infrastructure though.

To make use of mobile and web based solutions you will of course need to move your data "to the cloud" – that is, store it on a server that is connected to and accessible from the Internet, or hand it over to providers that can offer this – easy to say yes, but involves quite a bit of expertise to set up or ongoing payments on your behalf, or both, and you will need to change your approach to working with your systems, ensuring they are recoverable and safe, this is no doubt all worth the effort in the end.

So as the whole business world heads irreversibly in this direction, which will take some time for all businesses, particularly small businesses to reach this holy grail of anywhere, anytime, always on, access and the resulting "work life balance" everyone is apparently striving for, lets look at some options you have right now.

There is a way, right now, that your I.T. support guys (whether that's staff, a consulting company, or your nephew that knows all about computers) can give you access to the programs you use everyday on a PC at your work.

CURRENT SOLUTION

The solution requires you to be running at least one server in your office and it should be running one of the Windows Server operating systems – i.e. Not Windows 7 or 8 but Windows Server 2012, or maybe Windows 2008 R2. You need to make use of a Windows feature called Terminal Server. This will take some expertise to set up, but once it's done, provided you have an Internet connection, you can access the server running Terminal Server and use it, in a window on any Windows PC, as if you were sitting at that computer in your office. You are reaching in over the Internet, and using the PC...remotely.

So, if you set up that Windows Terminal Server in your office, with the software you want to use remotely – that is, Constructor, then connect to it over the Internet from anywhere, you will be running that software, from anywhere.



Effectively the Terminal Server sends heaps and heaps of “pictures” of the screen down to your computer, over the Internet. Every time you move the mouse or type something, of the screen changes back in the office, those changes are streamed down to your computer, and every time you click the mouse, or type something, those signals are sent back up to the office computer and are processed, just as they would be if the mouse and keyboard were plugged into that computer. There is no real computer smarts going on at your (remote) end – no calculation or processing is occurring on your computer, it’s just showing you the screen from the office one. So, with regards to speed, you are only limited by the speed of your Internet **connections**.

Note I say connections. Remember the signals need to go from you computer or laptop at home or where ever you are, up to the Internet, then be *downloaded* by the server at your office, then processed (that’s the quick part), then *uploaded* by your computer in the office to the Internet, then *downloaded* by your remote computer. Now normally, *download* speeds are pretty quick, but unfortunately *upload* speeds are traditionally not so speedy. That’s ok, it doesn’t prevent this from working very effectively, just be aware though, the real limiting factor with regards to performance here is the upload speeds of **both** Internet connections here – the one at home (remote location) and the one at the office. Now it is the office computer that will be doing the most uploading. Your remote computer is just sending some mouse clicks, mouse moves, and key presses – that’s easy stuff, the office computer (the Terminal Server) is sending loads of stuff, particularly if you have 2 or 3 users doing this at the same time, so make sure your Office Internet connection is truly a business grade connection, with decent upload speed as well as download speed.

Your life will be made easier too (or the life of your I.T. guys) if your Internet Service Provider can provide you with a static IP address. This means, the number assigned to your server when you connect to the Internet, never changes. A static IP address makes all this a lot easier to set up.

Talk to your “IT” guys about setting up remote access in this way – if you haven’t already. Constructor are also happy to answer any questions they may have, but normally, they are more qualified to handle such a set up, the we are.
