

VMware FAQ: Microsoft Windows Vista Licensing in a virtual machine for VDI 04/03/2007

1. What did Microsoft announce?

Microsoft announced new ways to license and deploy the operating system for Software Assurance customers using Windows Vista. Specifically, Microsoft announced the availability of a subscription license called Windows Vista Enterprise Centralized Desktops (VECD) which allows customers to use Windows in virtual machines centralized on server hardware.

2. What is Windows Vista Enterprise Centralized Desktops (VECD) and how does it work in helping customers?

VECD enables customers to deploy and run Windows Vista Enterprise in virtual machines on server hardware. This will enable VMware VDI customers and prospects to host centralized virtual desktops on VMware Infrastructure 3 and access these using remote PCs and thin clients. VECD is available to Microsoft Software Assurance customers for an annual, per-device subscription fee. The fee varies based on whether your business is licensing PCs or thin clients to access the virtual desktop. The subscription fee amount is yet to be released from Microsoft.

3. What versions of Windows desktop operating system is this good for?

This mode of licensing applies to Windows Vista Enterprise with Software assurance. Of course, customers can use "downgrade rights" under their Software Assurance agreement to deploy any version of Windows Professional editions (Windows 2000 Professional, XP Professional, and Vista Enterprise) in a virtual machine.

4. What about customers who aren't under Microsoft Software Assurance program?

Customers not under Software Assurance can still buy Windows Vista Business, Vista Ultimate, or Windows XP at retail price (Fully packaged price) to run in a virtual machine. We encourage customers who do not want to purchase Software Assurance to work with their Microsoft licensing representative and/or their preferred OEM vendor to extend these product use rights to non Software Assurance customers.

5. What about running Windows Vista in a virtual machine on a traditional PC in products like VMware Workstation and ACE?

Microsoft Windows XP Volume Licensing customers have the rights to run one additional copy of Windows XP (including older versions) in a virtual machine on a PC. With Windows Vista Ultimate, Business and Enterprise, customers can run up to four copies (including older versions) in a virtual machine on a PC.

6. What about Digital Rights Management and BitLocker (Vista hard drive encryption)?

Microsoft does not allow customers to use Digital Rights Management or BitLocker (i.e. Vista hard drive encryption) in a virtualized environment. We encourage customers to work with their Microsoft licensing representative and/or their preferred OEM vendor to extend these product use rights in a virtualized environment.

7. What about Windows Vista Home and Vista Home Premium?

Microsoft does not allow Vista Home or Vista Home Premium to be run in a virtual machine. This means customers will need to buy a retail license (fully packaged product) of Vista Business, Vista Ultimate, or Windows XP to run the Windows desktop operating system in a virtual machine.