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Harvest in a Citrix Environment



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Document Version

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to give a summary of Trinem Consulting's recommendations and considerations when implementing CA's AllFusion Harvest Change Manager within in Citrix environment.

Citrix Considerations

The following list details some details of what should be considered when implementing Harvest in a Citrix environment.

Windows Clients

The Windows client is installed normally on the Citrix server and the correct patch applied. The only real technical problem that may be encountered is a "Sharing Violation" type error, indicating that part of the software was in use when the patch was applied (this is perhaps because the client was run up before being patched). The only solution required is to re-boot the Citrix server.

It may be possible to circumvent this by packaging the Harvest client and patch using the Citrix packager. This works by recording the changes that the installers make to both the filing system and the registry, and then allows them to be "re-played" on any of the Citrix servers in the server farm. This is still being investigated, but it offers a quicker and more reliable installation route.

Checking Out Under Citrix

Checking out under Citrix allows you to check out to somewhere like N:\Temp. N: is actually the server's local hard drive with all the software on it, like C: on a standalone box. This is inherently dangerous as you do not normally see this drive from within the Citrix environment.

If the user is then given access to either Notepad or Windows Explorer, they will most likely find that N:\temp does not contain their checked out files. This is because different applications run on different servers (some sites may have 'farms' of Citrix servers). N: is the local hard drive of the server, so if your app runs on a different server to the one you have the Harvest Client running on, you see nothing. This can be rectified by either checking out to a shared location, or by forcing the applications to run on the same server.

In the production environment, write access to N: is restricted, but the drive is still visible under the Files tab of the Windows client. In practice, users will know to avoid this drive, though it would be nice if it could be hidden, as it is in the standard windows "Open" and "Save As" dialogs. Users will instead check files out to their home directory, which is mapped to the same drive letter, no matter which Citrix server the client is running on.

Possible DAR: Is it possible to hide drives in the Files tab if they have been marked as hidden in the Citrix environment?

There is also a minor issue with the user's context being saved into this home directory. As it is visible from all machines (servers and fat clients), the user can sometimes be presented with a warning dialog which reminds them that they last accessed these context settings from another machine. Whilst this may be useful for reminding users that their local C: drive might not contains the files they previously checked out there, in the Citrix environment, the whole point is that the environment is **exactly** the same, regardless of which server is being used to actually run the client.

Some effort needs to be put into seeing when and why this dialog appears, and also into making sure that the users know which button to select if/when they encounter it.

Agents on Citrix

In order to access an Agent on the Citrix server from HarWeb, there must be an entry for the Citrix server itself in the Harvest server's hosts file. This then allows unlimited access to the Citrix server's local disks, which again defeats the purpose of running Citrix, namely by preventing ordinary users re-configuring machines by writing files in the wrong places. Note that you must refer to the Citrix server and not the terminal you are using.

Hosts File

"\Windows\System32\drivers\etc\hosts" needs to contain an entry for the Harvest server in order for the 'Citrixified' Harvest Clients to be able to find the Broker.

Conclusions

On the face of it Citrix does not seem to be too complicated to get Harvest up and running. Managing the system so that users can only check out into their home directories (for example) is the hard part as Harvest does nothing to enforce where a user can (or can't) write to. In fact the Harvest Agent/Broker system completely bypasses the normal file system security employed by Citrix.