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H.P. Unveils Mobile Thin Client

By JON BRODKIN

HP unveiled its first mobile thin client and two additional desktop thin client products Thursday, as the vendor continues to ramp up its desktop virtualization technology following the acquisition of former competitor Neoware.

HP has more than doubled research and development investments in thin client technology over the past 18 months, while adding development centers in Pennsylvania, France and Shanghai to house engineers working on new thin clients and related technology, says Tad Bodeman, director of the blade PC and thin clients group at HP.

Thin client technology has been around for years, but HP officials say it's ready to grow in popularity because of increased concerns about security and energy usage.

HP's moves come four months after rival Wyse unveiled two mobile thin clients with integrated smart card and Bluetooth support.

Mobile thin clients could solve the problem of missing laptops that expose sensitive information, says Thai Nguyen, an HP marketing manager. HP's mobile thin client accesses data remotely but doesn't store data itself, she says.

"**A** lot of people are concerned about data security on desktops and notebooks," says Klaus Besier, Neoware's former CEO, who is now vice president for thin clients in the HP personal systems group. "That drives a lot of the interest in thin client technology to really replace the traditional PC or notebook where appropriate."

Eighteen months ago, HP had only one thin client development center, in Houston, before adding a new one in France, Bodeman says. The acquisition of

Neoware, completed two months ago, allowed HP to take over the smaller company's technology and facilities in Shanghai and Pennsylvania.

Including the acquisition of Neoware, HP officials say they have quadrupled their headcount in thin client engineering. With the combined expertise of HP and Neoware, Bodeman says HP has focused on better delivery of processing and graphics capabilities to remote clients, and improving wireless capabilities of the mobile thin clients.

"We're combining the most powerful processing and graphics capability with HP's remote graphics software, so we're able to deliver a stellar rich media experience, which has been one of the challenges for desktop replacement alternatives," Bodeman says. "HP's also integrated the same wireless technology we ship today in mobile notebooks into these thin clients."

Depending on the workloads, dozens of users can be supported by one server, while between four and six users can be supported by one console or "master thin client," HP officials say. HP partners with [Microsoft](#), Citrix and [VMware](#) to provide virtualization software.

The mobile thin client HP is announcing today is called the HP Compaq 6720t Mobile Thin Client. Running Microsoft Windows XP, this mobile thin client has no hard drive, fan or other moving parts, but does support Wi-Fi-powered wireless LAN, and 3G broadband wireless capabilities, HP says. The client, which has a 15.4-inch screen, will be available in late January starting at US\$725.

"Data files and software applications are saved remotely on a secure server [to] help reduce the risk of data loss, viruses and product theft," HP states. "Client management is simplified, as IT administrators are able to remotely install, manage, update and execute application software."

The two new desktop thin clients are the HP Compaq t5730 (running Windows XP) and HP Compaq t5735 (running Debian Linux). These thin clients provide controlled user access and support two-factor user authentication, HP says. HP promises "desktop-like features, high-end graphics, [and] the HP Secure USB Compartment," which can be hidden and locked.

The Windows version starts at \$499 and the Linux client starts at \$450.