



# Cloud Power



## Appraisal Firm Uses Hosted Desktop Solution to Boost Productivity by 12 Percent

**Customer:** Valuation Technology

**Website:**

[www.valuationtechnology.com](http://www.valuationtechnology.com)

**Customer Size:** 18 employees

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Professional services—Real estate

**Partners:**

Horizon Private Cloud

[www.horizonprivatecloud.com](http://www.horizonprivatecloud.com)

Citrix

[www.citrix.com](http://www.citrix.com)

**Customer Profile**

Valuation Technology provides automated and traditional appraisals of residential real estate for the mortgage lending, loan servicing, and asset management industries designed to improve the accuracy and reliability of property valuation.

**Software and Services**

- Microsoft Office
  - Microsoft Office Professional 2010
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
  - Windows Server 2008 R2
- Third-Party Software
  - Citrix XenApp
  - Citrix CloudPortal Services Manager
  - Citrix ShareFile

For more information about Microsoft Cloud Power, go to:  
[www.microsoft.com/cloud](http://www.microsoft.com/cloud)

“With access to the programs they need from wherever they’re working, appraisers will be able to save at least five hours a week.”

Cory Kill, Chief Information Officer, Valuation Technology

To boost productivity, Valuation Technology (ValuTech) wanted to provide appraisers in the field with access to automated tools for market analysis, comparing properties, and creating reports. It was also looking for a better way to handle data storage to comply with industry regulations. ValuTech implemented the vDesktop solution from Horizon Private Cloud. Now, it expects to increase productivity by 12 percent—while also avoiding US\$60,000 in technology costs.

### Business Needs

Valuation Technology (ValuTech) prides itself on delivering innovation to an industry that has historically been slow to adopt new technologies. It was created by a team of veteran appraisers, including Cory Kill, who now serves as the company’s Chief Information Officer. “We started ValuTech because we believed that technology could help vastly improve the accuracy and precision of the real-estate appraisal process,” says Kill.

Founded in 2009, the company offers a suite of proprietary valuation and analytics products. It also partners with professional appraisers to fulfill property valuation requests from lending institutions.

In the past, ValuTech collected field data by using paper and pen. For each property they assessed, appraisers also compiled a substantial amount of information in the form of comparison data and photos. They typically had to reenter this information into software programs hosted onsite at the ValuTech office, at satellite offices, or at appraisers’ home offices. Once in the field, appraisers could find that the details of the property varied from the information they had used to do their market research. This often resulted in significant rework, with the appraisers returning to the office to redo their research, and then traveling back to the neighborhood to collect additional data.





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The need to manually reenter data introduced opportunities for error; it also restricted appraiser productivity and impinged on the flexibility of their work environment. "Because they didn't have remote access to the most current data—stored in systems hosted at the office—appraisers were limited in how much they could actually do from the field," says Kill. Further, it complicated compliance with a federal government mandate that requires appraisal management companies to keep records of all the properties they have evaluated for up to five years. "Without centralized storage and management of valuation data, we faced a sizeable compliance risk," says Kill.

## Solution

To reduce technology infrastructure costs, empower appraisers to work more efficiently, and strengthen compliance with government mandates, ValuTech decided to adopt a hosted desktop solution. In late 2011, Kill started investigating the market for local desktop virtualization solution providers. "We chose to work with Horizon Private Cloud because they demonstrated a willingness to learn our business, as well as to provide us with a solution that fits our needs now and is scalable as we grow," says Kill.

The Horizon Private Cloud vDesktop solution is based on the Windows Server 2008 R2 operating system and Citrix XenApp. It also incorporates Citrix CloudPortal Services Manager, an application that provides a web-portal interface for managing the delivery of cloud services. This centralized, self-service tool is important for ValuTech because it enables the company to simplify everyday

administrative tasks, such as adding users, changing passwords, and deploying applications to new employees. During the first phase of its migration to the vDesktop solution, ValuTech worked closely with consultants from Horizon Private Cloud to convert several specialized business applications for delivery in a virtualized environment. Among these is Appraise-It, a product from a provider called Software for Real Estate Professionals, which appraisers use to create appraisal reports. Horizon Private Cloud is helping ValuTech test remote access to this and other applications. ValuTech has rolled out the vDesktop service to a pilot group of six employees as it prepares for full deployment of the solution.

In the coming weeks, ValuTech also plans to take advantage of Citrix ShareFile through its vDesktop service subscription. The company plans to use ShareFile, which provides enterprise-grade file-sharing capabilities, to centralize data storage, simplify data sharing, and manage regulatory auditability.

## Benefits

By moving to the vDesktop hosted desktop solution from Horizon Private Cloud, ValuTech anticipates the following benefits:

- **Avoid US\$60,000 in technology costs.** ValuTech has eliminated the need to upgrade software licenses and purchase new server hardware. Also, because its virtualized applications require lower CPU utilization to run, the company can defer investment in new PCs—while still delivering fast, reliable performance to users. Further, by outsourcing

maintenance of its infrastructure to Horizon Private Cloud, ValuTech anticipates that it will recoup costs from fewer downtime incidents. In total, executives estimate that the company will benefit from an annual cost avoidance of \$60,000. "Every dollar saved on technology costs means we can invest more in innovating our products and services," says Kill. "As a startup, this is a hugely important benefit."

- **Improve data control, reduce business risk.** All of the company's applications and data will be hosted in a Horizon Private Cloud data center, instead of on local servers and PCs. "Moving to a hosted desktop model provides a much stronger data security posture and alleviates the burden of having to constantly worry about compliance," says Kill.
- **Increase appraiser productivity—from anywhere.** By providing remote access to business critical applications through any device, ValuTech can help appraisers improve efficiency. Now that appraisers can avoid unnecessary trips to the office to access valuation tools or retrieve files from the network, they will be able to complete more appraisals each week in the same amount of time. "With access to the programs they need from wherever they're working, appraisers will be able to save at least five hours a week," says Kill. For a standard 40-hour work week, this efficiency gain represents a 12 percent increase in productivity. "The flexibility we gain from vDesktop gives us a distinct competitive edge," says Kill.