

The Advantages of Universal Thin Client Management

By: Brien M. Posey



One of the main reasons why thin clients have gained popularity as an alternative to PCs is because thin client devices tend to be lightweight and low maintenance. However, this simplicity often comes at a cost. Thin client devices are notoriously difficult to manage at scale. As the scale of a typical thin client deployment increases, so too does the cost of managing those clients. In fact, management costs can potentially reach a point at which they begin to mitigate the savings that lead the organization to adopt thin clients in the first place.

IGEL, a German thin client hardware vendor, has carved out a market niche by focusing not only on thin client hardware, but also on large scale endpoint management. IGEL offers a simple, smart and secure solution to optimize, and reduce the cost and complexity of managing endpoints. The IGEL solution is based around three primary components (in addition to the thin client hardware) – the Universal Management Suite, the Universal Desktop Converter, and the Unified Management Agent.

THE UNIVERSAL MANAGEMENT SUITE

The Universal Management Suite is the flagship of the IGEL product line. This tool was specifically designed to help administrators to overcome the struggles of managing endpoints at scale. This best in class management solution is designed to simplify the device management process. The software automatically captures relevant information such as hardware specifications, license information, even the patches that have been installed. Administrators can also document the device location, inventory number, and other pertinent information.

IGEL has also designed the Universal Management Suite to be very easy to use – quite an accomplishment for a management tool. The installation process is wizard based and can be completed in about 20 minutes. The management interface is identical to the interface that is used to locally configure IGEL's thin clients and zero clients. As such, an administrator that knows how to configure an IGEL client already knows how to use the Universal Management Suite.

The IGEL Universal Management Suite is included with the Universal Desktop Converter and with IGEL thin client and zero client hardware at no additional charge.

THE UNIVERSAL DESKTOP CONVERTER

Thin client devices tend to be significantly less expensive to deploy, maintain, and manage than traditional computing devices such as PCs. Even so, it probably does not make sense financially for an organization to completely abandon its investment in desktop hardware if those devices are still viable. IGEL solves this problem with its Universal Desktop Converter.

The Universal Desktop Converter is a Linux operating system that can be installed onto desktop PCs, laptops, and even onto select thin client devices. The Universal Desktop Converter replaces the device's native operating system, and turns the device into a dedicated thin client. Organizations are therefore able to reap the advantages of thin client computing without having to abandon their existing hardware investment.

UNIFIED MANAGEMENT AGENT

The third major component in IGEL's software offerings is the Unified Management Agent. Although IGEL focuses on thin client computing, it is common for larger organizations to use a mixture of thin client devices and more traditional thick clients, such as PCs. Such a mixture of devices may be temporary, during a transition to thin client computing, or an organization may opt to use a combination of thin and thick clients indefinitely.

While an organization that has a mixture of thin and thick clients could conceivably use the Universal Desktop Converter to convert PCs into thin client devices, there are often business requirements for a portion of the user base to continue running a locally installed Windows operating system. In these types of situations, the Unified Management Agent can be used to bring the devices under management without the device being converted to a thin client.

The Unified Management Agent is designed to work on devices that are running Windows 7 or Windows 10. The agent can be automatically deployed to PCs via group policy or through a variety of other software packaging and distribution tools. Once installed, the Unified Management Agent allows single pane of glass management for both thin client devices and PCs natively running Windows operating systems. Hence, the Universal Management Suite becomes a single tool for managing both PCs and thin clients.

IGEL'S THIN CLIENT AND ZERO CLIENT HARDWARE

Even though IGEL is best known for its Universal Management Suite, it also offers a full line of thin client and zero client hardware. IGEL offers several different **hardware series**, and IGEL hardware has best in class warranty 3 years.

ABOUT IGEL

Although IGEL has long enjoyed a strong market presence in Europe, the company is rapidly establishing a significant market presence in the United States. IGEL has opened a [new headquarters in San Francisco](#), and the size of its USA based team has doubled in the last 90 days.

Much of IGEL's success can be attributed to its unique management offerings, but the company is also known for staying ahead of the technology curve. IGEL was for example, among the first to embrace [VMware's Blast protocol](#).

IGEL has an innovative roadmap with many new releases planned. vVersion 10 of the IGEL Linux operating system is scheduled for release in November, along with UDC3 and UD Pocket. IGEL will also be releasing a Secure Cloud Gateway in January of 2017.

IGEL's innovative and powerful product offerings have already attracted customers such as General Motors and Chico's, and powerhouse brands like Samsung are currently looking to IGEL to power their [hardware solutions](#).

To see how IGEL can solve your organization's thin client management problems, take the IGEL challenge. Get three free Universal Management Suite licenses by sending a request to ayres@igel.com.

About the author



Brien Posey is a seven-time Microsoft MVP with 25 years of IT experience and expertise in Windows Server, IIS, Exchange Server, File Systems/Storage, Cloud and Datacenter Management, and Windows and Devices for IT. During that time he has published thousands of articles and has written or contributed to dozens of IT books. Prior to becoming a freelance writer, Posey served as chief information officer for a national chain of hospitals and healthcare facilities. He has also worked as a network engineer for some of the nation's largest insurance companies and for the Department of Defense at Fort Knox. As a side project, Posey is currently training as a Commercial Scientist-Astronaut Candidate.