Switching From Citrix to AVD With Nerdio

A business guide to making the move

nerdio

INTRODUCTION

Many enterprises are looking to Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) as a modern, enterprise-ready solution to future-proof their virtual desktop strategy and digital transformation. Faced with unsustainable Citrix cost increases, business leaders are feeling pressure to make the switch, but their IT departments may be hesitant due to lack of experience with AVD.

This guide takes a close look at the issues, making the business case for AVD in conjunction with Nerdio as the best answer to the Citrix challenge.

> **Citrix was complicated. I could throw a level 1 tech at Nerdio and he could understand it in an afternoon. The transition to Nerdio was seamless.**
>
> **– IT Manager, M Holland**

WHY MOVE TO AVD?

As cloud adoption continues to increase, Microsoft's rapid pace of development is creating an incentive for IT leaders to rethink their reliance on Citrix.

Citrix is a well-known vendor in desktop virtualization, but it is no longer the undisputed leader. We have reached an inflection point in the market, and Microsoft solutions such as AVD and Windows 365 have become leading virtualization contenders. According to a 2023 Gartner Magic Quadrant report on desktop as a service (DaaS) solutions, Microsoft has clearly surpassed Citrix in its ability to deliver and its vision for the future of DaaS.

Source: "Magic Quadrant for Desktop as a Service," Gartner, September 2023. https://www.gartner.com/doc/reprints?id=1-2EWOLIQV&ct=230905&st=sb

However, the reasons to move to Microsoft are not solely technology-related. The Gartner Magic Quadrant report specifically calls out Citrix licensing and pricing as an important source of customer dissatisfaction. Costs have risen, and the support experience has changed due to evolution of the Citrix business model, putting pressure on the business to change course:

- Support costs have increased dramatically for some customers, but there are continual changes and uncertainty with customer support and account management.

- Smaller enterprise customers are no longer supported directly by Citrix itself, raising questions of quality, accountability, responsiveness, and access.

Microsoft 365 E3 or higher licenses include AVD:
Many enterprises are already paying for it!

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS TO AVD ADOPTION

IT leaders may be hesitant to switch from the Citrix platform they know and have invested in over to AVD, questioning its suitability for their needs and what it will take to manage the new environment.

Ask the right questions to make an informed decision about Citrix and AVD.

QUESTION 1: IS AVD UP TO THE TASK?

Microsoft has been actively developing its virtualized desktop solutions, including AVD and Windows 365. Today, these platforms are fully enterprise-ready, as evidenced by widespread adoption in organizations of all sizes.

Points to consider

- **Cloud, on-prem, or hybrid?** – For industries where information security is mission-critical, hybrid environments are seen as a priority, and may have considered hybrid deployment to be an argument in favor of Citrix. But as of mid-2023, this is no longer a point of difference: Microsoft has introduced Azure Stack HCI, a hyperconverged hybrid environment that combines on-premises infrastructure with Azure Cloud Services. This technology promises to be a game-changer and is evidence of Microsoft's commitment to virtualization.

- **User experience** – For the vast majority of virtual desktop admins, the AVD user experience when properly configured — something made far easier with Nerdio — holds up well when the two environments are compared side-by-side.

- **Compatibility** – Application compatibility is always a moving target; this is true whether it's a commercial application or one developed in-house. Compatibility issues related to cloud deployment will require reworking regardless of the desktop virtualization platform. Microsoft has an advantage here given the depth and extent of the Windows ecosystem — a strength specifically identified in the September 2023 Gartner Magic Quadrant DaaS report.

Rapid uptake of AVD

From the very beginning, AVD adoption has grown strongly according to a survey of 500 IT professionals.

Less than a year after Microsoft rolled out AVD:

26% of surveyed enterprises had put AVD into production

58% expected to roll AVD out within two years

Source: Azure Virtual Desktop Adoption Trends, joint survey report by eG Innovations and AVD TechFest. https://www.eginnovations.com/ebooks/azure-virtual-desktop-adoption-trends-ebooks

QUESTION 2: WHAT ABOUT RESILIENCE?

Keeping desktops online is a key concern for any organization running virtualized environments. The ability to distribute workloads and keep them secure has long been a Citrix selling point — but it can be a high-cost way to achieve resiliency if a fully automated failover that transitions workloads in real time is needed.

Azure is everywhere

60+ Azure regions | 220+ datacenters | 170+ edge sites | 165k+ miles of fiber

- Datacenter Site
- Edge Site
- Fiber

Source: Advancing global network reliability through intelligent software by Mark Russinovich, Chief Technology Officer and Technical Fellow, Microsoft Azure. https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/blog/advancing-global-network-reliability-through-intelligent-software-part-1-of-2/

Points to consider

- **Disaster recovery** – The Azure Cloud is spread across more than 60 regions around the world. AVD allows users to set up a host pool that distributes workloads across them to provide disaster recovery. Using AVD's native tools to do so can be relatively complex, but Nerdio makes it simple. Additionally, the arrival of Azure Stack HCI makes hybrid cloud a reality for AVD users.

- **Native security** – All essential elements of security are provided by AVD, including host pool copy/ paste restrictions, data download control, and limits on moving data. Nerdio makes setting these up simple and accessible — and also provides tight access control to the management console itself.

QUESTION 3: WILL AVD WITH NERDIO REALLY SAVE MY ORGANIZATION MONEY?

The issue of cost has many dimensions. In addition to license subscription and support fees, there are the costs of cloud resource use and time spent managing the environment. The total cost of ownership needs to be considered to make a true comparison.

Reducing Azure spending with Nerdio
Up to 75% lower cost
with Nerdio Auto-scaling compared to native AVD management

Points to consider

- **What you're paying for** – Citrix comes at a premium (and increasing) price far higher than AVD with Nerdio. Its feature set is broad, and enterprises must pay for all of it whether they need it or not. Additionally, the Citrix fees are charged on top of AVD. Moving to or consolidating on AVD eliminates that expense, and adding Nerdio to simplify management is far less costly than using Citrix to accomplish the same tasks.

- **Ability to optimize IT spend** – Nerdio makes paying only for the resources actually used easier by offering clear, real-time visibility into cost-per-user along with the ability to minimize it autonomously using the Auto-scaling feature.

- **The value-add of IT expertise** – Some IT professionals have built a career on becoming Citrix experts and are understandably concerned about being made redundant in a move off of the platform. The expertise, knowledge, and skills they've acquired still apply to AVD. At the same time, the simplicity of Nerdio offers a new opportunity for them. By dramatically streamlining AVD management, the time and expertise that they have been devoting to routine tasks can be redirected to work on more important projects, such as development, governance, and data security.

QUESTION 4: WHAT'S THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY TO MANAGE AVD?

Nerdio is built exclusively with and for Microsoft's technology stack in partnership with Microsoft. Nerdio tools are highly automated, simple, and accessible, with low resource overhead and low cost — and they're tightly focused on AVD configuration, management, and optimization.

Nerdio also provides a better alternative to the costly, complex, and time-consuming use of DevOps pipelines that are the most common way of managing AVD natively. Nerdio delivers the best of both worlds: simpler than native AVD management and less expensive than Citrix.

Simplifying AVD management with Nerdio

Up to 80% less time

spent managing AVD compared to native tools and DevOps pipeline management

Points to consider

- **Task simplification at scale** – Nerdio's highly automated console and help desk tools are designed to support thousands of AVD desktops. This translates into dramatic time savings and more effective optimization: A fully functional environment can be stood up with Nerdio Manager for Enterprise in just two hours, which is markedly faster and easier than a full Citrix deployment. Nerdio also simplifies complex AVD configuration tasks, such as workload regionalization, and streamlines rollouts of updates and patches.

- **Visibility into the environment and resource use** – Nerdio surfaces key metrics that are highly relevant to the business in a clear and accessible way, such as resource usage and cost-per-user. This enables the enterprise to apply chargeback policies accurately. Nerdio Auto-scaling also dynamically manages cloud use, ensuring that the business only pays for what it consumes, while IT managers can easily allocate resources as needed.

- **Need for expertise** – Native AVD management via DevOps pipelines can be inefficient, requiring extensive involvement from knowledgeable IT staff. By automating and simplifying many essential tasks, Nerdio delivers the desired results more quickly and with less risk of human error.

AVD MIGRATION TIMELINE

Embarking on a journey from your current VDI solution to Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) can be a transformative move for your organization. This timeline serves as a strategic guide, ensuring you allocate ample time to take stock, deploy, and rigorously test your applications within AVD. Leverage our proven expertise and insights to empower your migration process, ensuring an efficient transition to a more agile and scalable desktop experience.

AVD MIGRATION TIMELINE SUMMARY

Prepare Environment

Migrate Users

**Create AVD Resources**

Pilot Group
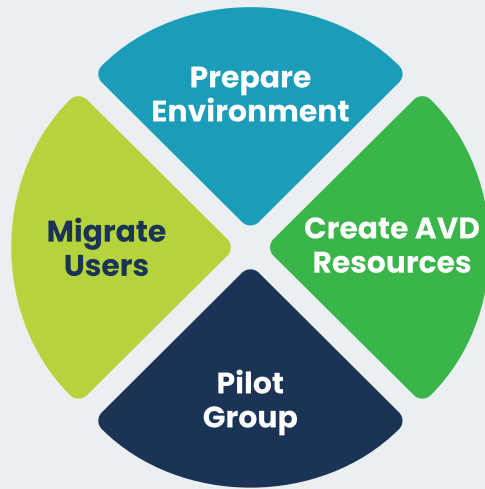
Factors to Consider

- Number of resources dedicated to the migration process
- Experience with deploying and managing Azure Resouces
- Change control and security review processes

Total Deployment Time

Large: 8,000+ users
12 months

Medium: 1,000-8,000 users
6 months

Small: 1,000 or less users
3 months

Prepare Environment

Migrate Users

Create AVD Resources

Pilot Group
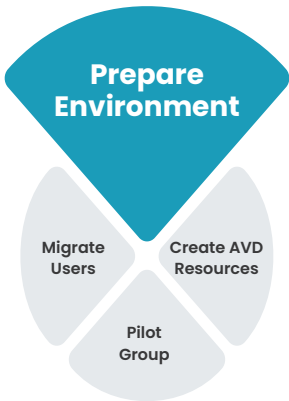
Phase 1
Prepare Identities

- Configure Entra ID
- Verify hybrid identities
- Permissions for deployment

Phase 2
Azure Subscriptions

- Create AVD Subscription
- Permissions for deployment
- Configure Azure Networking
- Deploy Nerdio

Factors to Consider

- Is Entra ID configured?
- Is Windows AD in use and synchronized with Entra ID?
- Are Azure Subscriptions and/or Landing Zones in place?

Deployment Time

Large: 8,000+ users
2 months

Medium: 1,000-8,000 users
1 month

Small: 1,000 or less users
2 weeks

Create AVD Resources

Phase 1
Applications

- Inventory existing applications
- Create MSIX App Attach
- Identify application hardware requirements
- Identify application test requirements
- Create application groups

Phase 2
AVD Host Pool Options

- Identify number of host pools
- Identify host pool types
- Create users groups for host pools

Phase 3
OS Image

- Identify OS version for pooled and personal host pools
- Create Azure Compute Gallery if replicating images
- Create application packages for AVD
- Create images with non-MSIX App Attach applications

Phase 4
Storage

- Identify storage option, Azure Files, or Azure NetApp Files
- Create FSLogix File Share
- Create MSIX App Attach file share
- Create Log Analytics Workspace

Phase 5
Test Host Pools

- Create pooled and/or personal host pool for testing
- Test image-based application install
- Test post-session host application install
- Test MSIX App Attach
- Use a change plan to identify issues and track changes

Phase 6
Client Configuration

- Verify end user client requirements (Windows, iOS, Mac, Web)
- Identify RDP settings for each host pool

Factors to Consider

- What is the number of applications, and are they cataloged?
- Will applications be converted to MSIX App Attach?
- How many images will be created?

Deployment Time

Large: 8,000+ users: 4 months

Medium: 1,000-8,000 users: 3 months

Small: 1,000 or less users: 1 month

Pilot Group

Phase 1
Change Management

- Create a comparison of end-user features for legacy VDI and AVD
- Create a communication plan
- Develop end-user content

Phase 2
Create Pilot Resources

- Identify pilot users
- Create pilot group host pools
- Enable AVD insights on pilot host pools

Phase 3
Run Pilot

- Verify image functionality
- Verify application functionality and performance
- Validate and adjust session host size
- Test communication plan
- Actively solicit feedback

Factors to Consider

- How many host pools in the pilot?
- Does the organization have a change management and training process in place?

Deployment Time

Large: 8,000+ users: 2 months

Medium: 1,000-8,000 users: 1 month

Small: 1,000 or less users: 3 weeks

Migrate Users

Phase 1
Create Host Pools

- Create productions host pools
- Enable host pools for AVD insights

Phase 2
Change Management

- Implement change management plan
- Monitor feedback channel
- Verify IT support group is prepared for the migration

Phase 3
Move Users to AVD

- Identify change method, staged by group or cut-over
- Move users
- Monitor feedback and support issues

Phase 4
Decommission Legacy VDI

- Decommission virtual and physical servers no longer required for VDI
- Cancel licensing, maintenance, and support contracts no longer required

Factors to Consider

- What is the number of host pools and user count?
- What is the migration plan, phased or cut-over?

Deployment Time

Large: 8,000+ users: 2 months

Medium: 1,000-8,000 users: 1 month

Small: 1,000 or less users: 3 weeks

WHY AVD WITH NERDIO IS THE MOST VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO CITRIX

The business case is straightforward. AVD combined with Nerdio delivers exactly what both organizations and IT departments are looking for: efficient desktop virtualization at the lowest cost.

1. **IT'S LESS EXPENSIVE**

   For many enterprises, changes to Citrix license terms and support policies are driving up costs to levels that are simply unsustainable. Nerdio costs start at $6 per user per month and top out at just $10 per user per month.

2. **IT'S FIT FOR PURPOSE**

   As evidenced by the Gartner DaaS report, Microsoft is actively innovating to address customer needs. AVD's global infrastructure, especially combined with Azure Stack HCI for those who need hybrid environments, makes it a direct competitor for the Citrix model. Nerdio mirrors this drive, with the ability to move quickly to assist customers with feature updates.

3. **IT'S SIMPLE**

   Nerdio offers a highly evolved, comprehensive, and easy-to-use set of management tools designed to make adoption, configuration, and management of AVD efficient, effective, and most of all, simple. This addresses a key concern for Citrix customers looking to make the switch.

There's much more to explore

Visit **getnerdio.com** to get all the details about Nerdio's approach and its advantages, schedule a demo, and download a free 30-day trial. We know you'll be impressed.

Check out our YouTube channel at **youtube.com/@Nerdiovideos.**

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Nerdio adds value on top of the powerful capabilities in Azure Virtual Desktop, Windows 365, and Microsoft Intune by delivering hundreds of features that simplify management, ensure efficient operations, and lower Azure compute and storage costs by up to 80% via automation. Nerdio is a packaged Azure application that runs in users' own tenant without compromising security and compliance.

Learn more about how much time and money your organization can save each month with Nerdio. For more information, visit www.getnerdio.com/nme.

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