

A report from VMworld 2008

VIRTUAL REALITY

VMworld, the world's largest virtualization event, offered a variety of technical events, birds-of-a-feather sessions, press conferences, and perhaps the biggest IT party ever. VMworld's fifth year is one to remember.

BY KEN HESS

VMware's VMworld 2008, held in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, September 15-18, offered a week of virtual reality. Immediately on walking into the registration and trade show areas, attendees could tell what the big topics of this year's conference would be: Desktop Virtualization, Cloud Computing, Virtual Infrastructure Management, and Virtual Storage.

Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) was a huge topic, and almost every vendor at the show had their own brand of VDI or supporting products for it. The major players – VMware, Microsoft, Red Hat/Qumranet, Dell, Citrix, HP, and others – all discussed their solutions for VDI. One big surprise in this area came on Tuesday from Cisco when they announced their new strategic partnership with VMware. The most notable portion of this announcement came when Cisco stated that the partnership included the use of Cisco's Wide Area Application

Services (WAAS) and Application Control Engine (ACE) to replace the industry standard Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP). The use of Cisco's proprietary services and protocols in place of RDP boosts performance by as much as 65 percent. This performance boost alone gives VMware a significant edge in the increasingly competitive VDI market.

Vendors were abuzz with the terminology du jour, such as cloud computing, virtual cloud, leveraged storage, VSANs (Virtual Storage Area Networks), and the usual preponderance of TLAs (Three-Letter Acronyms). Overall, vendors had a single important message to deliver: Virtualization is the future. Apparently I'm not the only one who agreed – more than 14,000 people attended VMworld this year.

VMworld was a huge success and exceeded everyone's expectations for attendance and participation. The one area in which I was left flat was on the press

side – no huge announcements were made – at least none of the magnitude that I expected. A few flattened expectations aside, the show was a big hit for VMware and the other vendors.

On Wednesday evening, conference-goers were treated to a blowout at the Las Vegas Motor Speedway. A fleet of buses shuttled us from the Venetian Hotel to the racetrack, where the party was already in full swing. From high-speed chauffeured rides on the track, to the pervasive rave-like music, to the free-flowing Red Bull and vodka, this was a night to remember (or maybe one that was hard to shake the next day).

In addition to the usual suspects, this year offered up an impressive vendor list of what VMworld promoters termed *New Innovators*. These high-energy newcomers are a breath of fresh air in this market dominated by big companies.

Because the exhibitor's list is difficult to find on the VMworld.com page, use this link: <http://vmware.webjackmorton.com/feed/companies.xml#exhibitors>.

If you take the time to visit the individual exhibitor sites, you'll find new product innovations – from virtual infrastructure management utilities, to provisioning applications, to ways to maximize your virtualized desktop usage.

If you missed this virtualization event of the year, don't despair; you can catch most of the information, including pictures, technical sessions, feedback videos, and press releases at VMworld.com. What you can't reproduce is the one-on-one information exchange at the Genius Bar (see Figure 1), the excited ambience of the trade show floor, or rubbing shoulders with the people who are in the virtualization community's driver seat. VMworld 2009 will be in beautiful San Francisco next year. I hope to see you there. ■



Figure 1: VMware's Genius Bar.