

The Hidden Cost of Poor VDI and How to Fix It

How DEX unblocks IT to resolve faster, see more clearly, and deliver smoother VDI performance.



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01.

Why VDI Needs a New Operational Model

How many tickets does it take before someone asks, “Is VDI even worth it?”

If you're leading or supporting a virtual desktop environment, you've probably heard that question more than once. Maybe you've even asked it yourself. And honestly? It's not the wrong ask.

After all, VDI was supposed to simplify everything. It promised centralized control, streamlined security, and greater flexibility for distributed and hybrid work. But somewhere along the way, it started creating just as many challenges as it was meant to solve, from slow logins and lagging applications to a rising tide of user performance complaints. And no matter where the issue begins, it almost always ends up on the VDI team's desk.

That is not a platform failure. It is a data failure.

As VDI environments scale across hybrid deployments and tools from multiple vendors, managing session quality has become harder to control and even harder to diagnose. Traditional monitoring tools might confirm that a VM is running, or a host is reachable, but they reveal nothing about what users are actually experiencing inside their session.

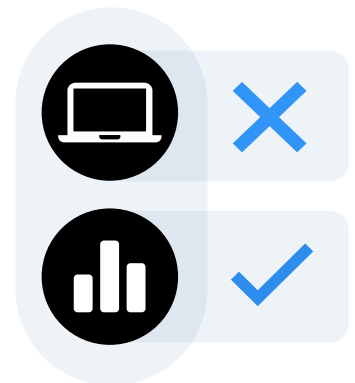
Without a clear view into every session, you're just guessing, and even routine issues are difficult to resolve. The service desk cannot isolate the cause, so they escalate. L2 investigates, but without telemetry from the session itself, there is little they can do. The ticket moves to L3 or the VDI team, consuming more time, using more budget, and often leaving the user in limbo. The result is a pattern of delays, repeat incidents, and rising support costs. And without hard evidence to pinpoint the source, the blame tends to stick, not to the app, the network, or the endpoint, but to the VDI platform itself.

That's when bigger questions start to surface. Is VDI still doing what it's supposed to do? Is it scaling the way we need it to? Is it still the right fit?

If you want to answer those questions with confidence, you need better insight, not just into systems, but into the experience itself. What's happening in the session, in real time, across every layer that could impact performance.

When you can finally see what's going on, you don't have to guess. You can fix the right thing faster. You can protect your team's time and energy. And you can stop wondering if the model still works, because you'll know.

And yes, it might just save your engineers' sanity in the process.



02.

The Cost of Scaling Without Visibility

The more virtual desktops you deploy, the more stretched your support capacity becomes. But you don't need an analyst report to tell you that. You see it every day.

The pressure's on. Not just because you're supporting more users, but because you're also juggling new configurations, shifting workflows, and less room for error. So, when something breaks, you're still expected to have answers before productivity takes a hit.

And as a VDI expert, you know how that plays out. A login takes longer than usual. An app hangs. A user logs a ticket because "VDI feels slow." But without visibility into the context around the incident, the support desk is left guessing. And when there's no obvious fix, the issue doesn't get resolved, it gets passed around.

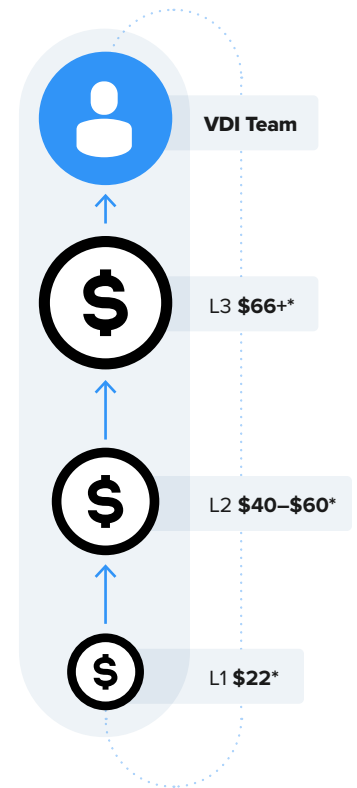
That back-and-forth burns time and teams spend hours looking in the wrong places, trying to rule things out instead of solving the problem. By the time it lands with the right person, the user's still waiting, and your teams already lost half a day on something that should've taken minutes.

Now imagine that pattern repeating across your organization. The numbers speak for themselves:

- **89%** of organizations say VDI tickets regularly escalate to specialists
- **31%** say it happens at least every single day
- A Level 1 ticket costs around **\$22**
- Escalated to Level 3? Often **\$66** or more
- Nearly **half of all VDI tickets** are performance-related, but difficult to diagnose without proper tooling

If just **10%** of users in a 5,000-seat environment face issues that require escalation each month, that's **\$400,000** in support costs annually, and that's before you factor in lost productivity, the strain on your most skilled engineers, or the reputational damage when IT leaders start questioning whether VDI is still delivering on its promise.

But even tracking the numbers doesn't solve the problem. Because if you can't see what's really going wrong, you can't fix it. And that brings us to the next layer of the issue.



* Estimated support ticket costs based on industry benchmarks from sources including HDI, MetricNet, and publicly available ITSM cost data. Actual costs may vary by organization.

03.

The Experience Gap: What's Undermining VDI

To the user, it's simple. If their desktop lags or freezes, something must be wrong with VDI.

But what's really causing that frustration isn't always the platform, and it's rarely just one thing. Most session issues stem from deeper experience problems that aren't immediately visible. Common culprits include:

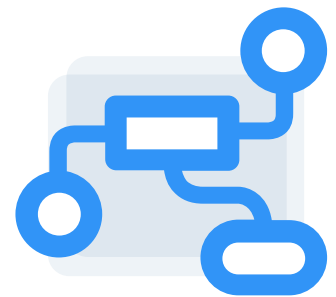
- Unstable or inconsistent network conditions
- Resource contention caused by image design
- Complicated or outdated login flows and scripts
- Underpowered or aging endpoint devices
- Application behavior that changes in virtual environments

Any of these can degrade session performance. Often, it's a combination. And without data into what's actually happening inside the session, support teams are left guessing.

They see the complaint but not the cause, so the ticket escalates. According to Nexthink data, most VDI-related escalations turn out to be application issues, not problems with the VDI layer itself. But without a way to differentiate, everything lands on the same desk.

That's the experience gap. The disconnect between what the user sees, what IT can observe, and what's actually going wrong. And the more that gap grows, the more time and trust it costs.

To close that gap, IT needs more than infrastructure status or static health checks. It needs a new level of insight, one that captures what's happening in the session, in real time, and turns symptoms into answers.



04.

How to Fix It: Moving to Full Observability

There's a difference between knowing a system is online and knowing it's optimized for every user. Most monitoring tools were built for the former.

In VDI, that distinction between backend status and real experience, is everything.

Traditional monitoring tools track infrastructure health. They tell you if the virtual machine is up, the CPU is stable, or the broker is reachable. What they don't tell you is whether the user is stuck on a login screen, waiting for their apps to load, or silently dealing with lag that makes them less productive.

This is where support starts to fall short, not because IT teams don't have tools but because they don't have the right ones. Without visibility into every VDI session, they're left watching systems, not experiences. And when something breaks, they can't always tell where, or why, or even if it's their responsibility.

Session observability changes that. Instead of just watching backend components in isolation, observability focuses on how the session behaves from the user's perspective across performance, responsiveness, stability, and consistency. It connects the dots between symptoms and causes, making it possible to understand the reality of what's happening in real time.

This is where Nexthink VDI Experience flips the model.

It doesn't manage infrastructure. It doesn't provision desktops. But it gives IT teams everything they need to finally see the whole picture, from Citrix and Azure Virtual Desktop to Windows 365 and more.



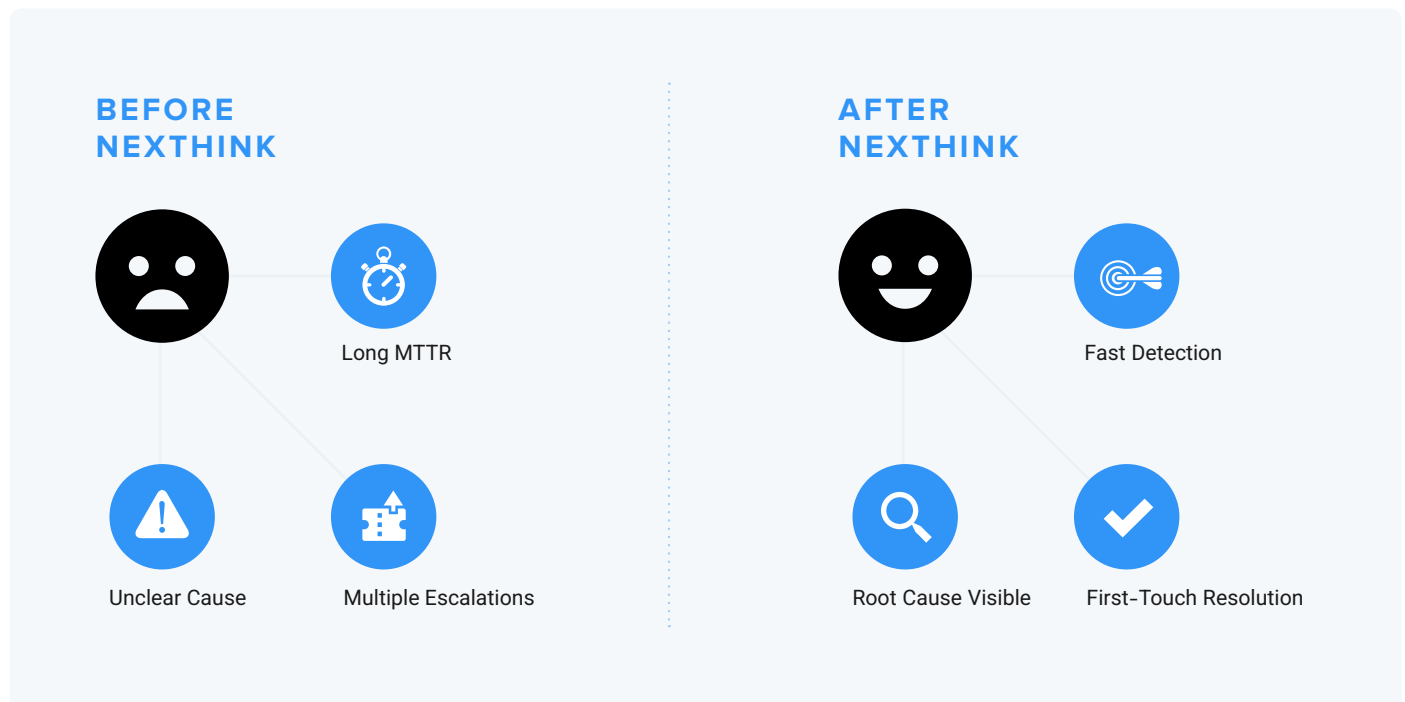
With Nexthink, IT gains:

- Real-time metrics sampled every 3 seconds
- Full visibility across sessions, images, devices, apps, and networks
- AI-powered anomaly detection and root-cause guidance
- End-to-end experience insight (virtual or physical)
- Guided workflows that reduce MTTR and help support teams act earlier

Instead of dashboards filled with disconnected data, you get a unified view of what matters. Instead of alerts that require investigation, you get context you can use. And instead of costly escalations, you empower frontline teams to resolve issues confidently.

Take one of our customers for example. One high-growth tech company used Nexthink to reduce over 380 hours of service desk workload in just three months by automating common fixes directly through ServiceNow. Their Level 1 agents were able to resolve recurring issues with a single click, cutting down on escalations and saving tens of thousands in support costs. That same approach, using live experience data to act earlier and smarter is now fully available to VDI systems.

Nexthink VDI Experience brings those automation and insight principles to virtual desktops, helping you surface the signal in the noise. It's not about giving you more data. It's about showing you what matters, when it matters, so you can resolve faster, reduce support noise, and take control of your VDI environment.



05.

Planning the Shift to Experience-Led VDI

...and choosing the right platform to support it.

Planning the shift to Experience-Led VDI means rethinking how you respond to issues, how you prioritize your time, and how your teams work together. That shift doesn't happen all at once, but it does need a plan.

The good news? It doesn't have to be complicated. A few smart changes can help you move through the transition smoothly and start seeing the benefits quickly.

Here's where we recommend starting:

Audit Your Blind Spots

Where are tickets stalling or bouncing between teams? What issues keep coming back with no clear cause? These are the friction points where lack of insight costs you most.

Prioritize Impact

Start with a use case that causes the most trouble. Slow logins, poor video performance, unreliable app launches. These are the problems users feel first, and fixing them earns trust fast.

Empower the Frontline

Give the service desk the context to act, not just escalate. When they can see inside the session in real time, they can solve more on the first call and keep tickets from landing where they don't belong.

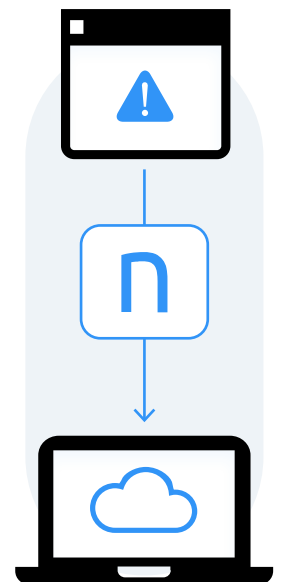
Measure What Matters

Track what changes, whether it's faster resolution times, fewer escalations or clearer root causes. These are all signs that you're heading in the right direction. Use that data to prove the value and guide your next move.

Scale With Confidence

Once you've improved one high-friction area, expand from there. Bring other teams in, cover more use cases, extend across platforms.

You don't need to rethink your VDI stack, just how you see it. And once you have experience-level data you'll know exactly where to focus and where you don't need to waste another minute.



What to Look for in a VDI Experience Platform

Well, you need the right platform behind you, one that can keep up with your team and make decisions easier, not harder.

So, when you're evaluating observability tools, make sure they can deliver:



Full session visibility in real time



Frequent telemetry updates



AI-assisted insight and root cause guidance



Built-in two-way employee engagement



Comparison across role/persona, device, and image



Lightweight deployment and minimal overhead



Support for cloud and hybrid VDI platforms



Actionable workflows, not just metrics



Vendor credibility in DEX and end-user experience



The right platform should meet your teams where they are today, with tools that make their day-to-day clearer, and more effective. But it should also grow with you, helping you scale smarter, troubleshoot faster, and make better decisions as your environment evolves.

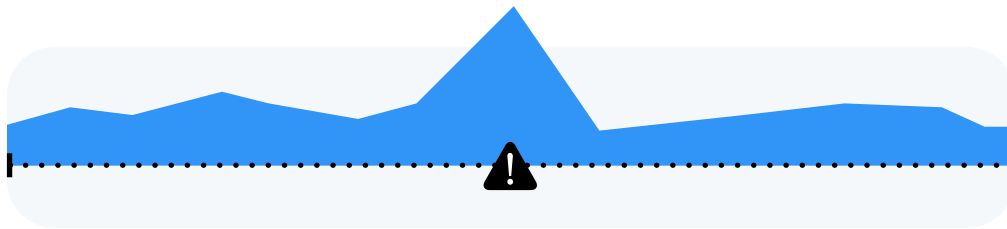
06.

Behind the Screen of an Application Outage

We've seen how traditional monitoring falls short when it comes to understanding user experience inside a virtual desktop session. But what happens when the issue isn't just lag its outright failure?

Let's look at a scenario every VDI engineer will recognize.

A user logs a ticket: the company's internal ERP system keeps freezing mid-report. It's a business-critical app, heavily customised in-house, relied on across departments, and according to the user VDI is the problem. First-line support checks the usual suspects: the virtual machine is stable, no alerts are firing, and network pings return as expected. Yet the complaint persists.



What happens next is all too familiar. Escalations begin. Time is lost. And still, no one can answer the simple question: what's actually going wrong?

In reality, the root cause could be almost anywhere. A recent patch might have quietly doubled the application's memory footprint. The backend database could have been relocated to a different data center, introducing latency that traditional tools wouldn't detect. A dependent file server might be intermittently inaccessible, disrupting key workflows. Or the application may have developed a memory leak that only becomes visible after extended use. None of this would show up in conventional monitoring, because on the surface, everything appears normal.

This is where [Nextthink VDI Experience](#) changes things entirely...

Instead of isolated system checks, you get continuous, correlated insight into every layer of the user experience.

And, in a scenario like this, Nextthink reveals what other tools can't:



Benchmark Application Behavior with Intelligence

See how your app performs compared to anonymized data from similar environments. Understand whether high memory use, crash frequency, or responsiveness is within normal range or a red flag. This is a level of context most tools cannot offer.



Spot the Moment Performance Drops

Three-second telemetry highlights exactly when experience issues begin, helping you tie them to updates, config changes, or patches.



Compare Virtual and Physical Environments

Determine whether the problem is isolated to VDI or also impacting local desktops. Side-by-side comparison removes the guesswork.



Follow Backend Dependencies

Track how the app connects to databases or services and surface any added latency from systems moved to new regions or cloud environments.



Know What “Healthy” Really Looks Like

With insights drawn from thousands of real-world sessions, Nextthink helps you detect early warning signs and act faster with full confidence.

With this level of clarity, your team can:



Rule out

infrastructure as the culprit.



Provide

the app team with concrete evidence of abnormal behavior.



Quantify

and understand the impact of changes in real terms, using live and comparative data.



Prevent

the issue from escalating across teams and disrupting more users.

That's the value of experience-first visibility. Not just knowing something is broken but knowing exactly why, how it compares, and what to do next. With Nexthink, VDI engineers shift from firefighting to forward-thinking, solving problems faster and with far greater confidence. you where things are broken, it helps you understand why and gives you the confidence to fix it.



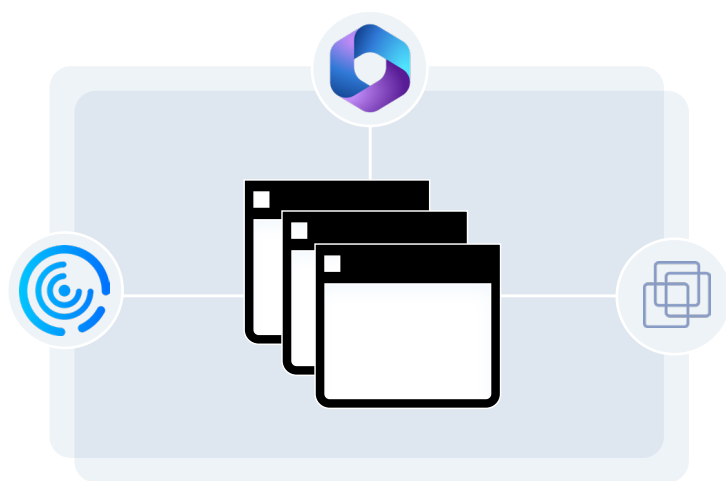
07.

Making Experience Your Advantage

If you're reading this, you already know something needs to change. Maybe it's the mounting escalations, the recurring performance complaints, or the nagging question of whether VDI is still worth the effort.

The answer isn't to abandon virtual desktops, it's to finally see them clearly.

Experience observability doesn't require you to rip and replace your existing VDI stack. It layers on top, giving you the insight you need to make your current investment work better. Whether you're running Citrix, VMware, AVD, or Windows 365, the principles remain the same: measure the experience, understand the patterns, and optimize what matters.



Ready to see what's possible?

Take our VDI Experience Assessment and get a personalized analysis of where insight gaps might be costing your organization. In just three questions, you'll get specific recommendations for improving performance and reducing operational overhead in your environment.

[Take the VDI Experience Assessment](#)

About Nextthink

Nextthink is the global leader in Digital Employee Experience management. The company's products allow enterprises to create highly productive digital workplaces for their employees by delivering optimal end-user experiences. Through a unique combination of real-time analytics, automation and employee feedback across all endpoints, Nextthink helps IT teams meet the needs of the modern digital workplace.

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