Editor's Note: This article starts a new series of articles focusing on Novell's ZENworks products. Over the next several months, NetWare Connection will periodically print tips and tricks to help you use these products to simplify and secure your company's network.

Contrary to many media reports you may be hearing, some companies and their employees still don't have infinite bandwidth. In fact, the truth is that some people still eke out their network existence using dial-up connections and that other people may have no network connection at all. These remote users may include traveling executives, users at remote offices, or an entire mobile sales force.

Of course, all this isn't news to you: Most likely you support users who have these kinds of challenges, and you are well aware of the challenges of providing these users with reliable desktop applications. Fortunately for both you and these remote users, ZENworks for Desktops 3 enables you to provide applications and updates to remote workstations that rarely (or never, for that matter) connect to your company's network and to remote workstations that do not have adequate bandwidth to download applications and system updates.

If you have worked with previous versions of ZENworks for Desktops, you are probably familiar with the following features for delivering applications to network workstations:

- On-demand application delivery
- Criteria-based application filtering
- Automated installation and personalization of Windows applications
- Dynamic application reconfiguration
- Self-healing or repair of broken applications

ZENworks for Desktops 3 includes a new capability: These application delivery services now work while workstations, such as laptops, are not connected to your company's network. This new feature provides an excellent option if bandwidth still remains an issue, but you must deliver mission-critical applications to remote users.

DISTRIBUTING APPLICATIONS TO WORKSTATIONS THAT OCCASIONALLY CONNECT TO THE NETWORK

To use ZENworks for Desktops 3 to distribute applications to remote workstations that have adequate bandwidth to occasionally connect to the network, complete the following steps:

Step 1 — Create an Application Package

ZENworks for Desktops 3 provides several methods for creating an application package that allows you to distribute an application to a Windows workstation. The application package contains changes to the registry, the file system, .INI files, system variables, and text files. These changes are required to make the application work on a Windows workstation. You can use the ZENworks Snapshots utility to create application packages for virtually any application.

ZENworks for Desktops 3 can also natively use Windows Installer (MSI) packages. Finally, the ZENworks Application Management Tool Kit (for ZENworks 2) allows you to convert WinInstall packages into ZENworks for Desktops application packages. (You can download the ZENworks Application Management Tool Kit from www.novell.com/coolsolutions/zenworks/downloadables.html.)


Step 2 — Associate the Application to Force Cache

First, make sure that the application package's Disconnectable attribute is enabled. (This attribute is enabled by default.) Then, use the Force Cache option in ZENworks for Desktops 3 to associate the application package with a User object. When the user next connects to the network, the application will be pulled down to a special hidden cache on the user's local hard drive. From this cache, the application can be installed to the local system, as well as repaired if the application has been damaged in any way.

DISTRIBUTING APPLICATIONS TO WORKSTATIONS THAT NEVER CONNECT TO THE NETWORK

To use ZENworks for Desktops 3 to distribute applications to remote workstations that never connect to the network, complete the following steps:
Step 1—Create an Application Package
Follow the directions in Step 1 of the previous section.

Step 2—Create a Disconnected Applications CD
ZENworks for Desktops 3 provides a tool you can use to create a CD for remote workstations. You can find this tool in the ZENworks for Desktops 3 ConsoleOne interface in the Tools menu. (Go to Tools, then Application Launcher Tools, then Create Virtual CD.) This tool allows you to select the applications you want to include on the CD and to specify where you want the application icons to appear in the Windows interface. (For example, you can specify that the application icons appear on the workstation's desktop or in the workstation's Start menu.)

After you have specified which applications you want on the CD, ZENworks for Desktops 3 will put all of the required files and folders in the file system directory that you specify. This directory then becomes a source that you can use with CD authoring software, such as Adaptec Easy CD Creator, to create application CDs for remote workstations.

Step 3—Deploy the Application Launcher Software
To use applications on the CD, remote workstations must have the ZENworks for Desktops 3 client and the Novell Application Launcher (NAL) installed. In the case of a workstation that occasionally logs in to your company's network, you should set NAL's attributes to include Auto-start NAL=yes. This setting forces the workstation to store the necessary files for the Novell Application Launcher locally and automatically starts these files every time the workstation is started.

In the case of a completely disconnected workstation—that is, a workstation that never logs in to the corporate directory—the NAL files can be installed on the local workstation. To install these files, copy them to the appropriate locations on the workstation's hard drive. (For an in-depth document about the files that make NAL tick, consult the ZENworks Cool Solutions article at www.novell.com/coolsolutions/zenworks/tips/t_old_app_dist_new_zw.html.)

After you have completed these steps at the workstation, you can insert the CD into the CD reader, and the new applications will become available.

CONCLUSION
As long as some workstations have inadequate connections, delivering software will remain a challenge. ZENworks for Desktops 3 provides tools to enable you to use CDs to install and repair applications on remote workstations.

ZENworks for Desktops 3 includes other features for delivering services to remote workstations. For example, ZENworks for Desktops 3 includes an Application Uninstall capability and a Disconnected Disk Imaging capability. You can learn more about these utilities by visiting www.novell.com/documentation/lg/zfd3/doci/index.html.

Ted Haeger is a ZENworks Solutions evangelist for Novell. He is also a member of the ZENworks product management team.

Visit our advertiser, AdRem Software, at www.adremsoft.com