



DMTF Accepts New Format for Portable Virtual Machines from Virtualization Leaders

New specification created by Dell, HP, IBM, Microsoft, VMware, XenSource aims to become an industry standard; will help ensure portability, integrity and automated installation/configuration of virtual machines

PORTLAND, ORE. – September 10, 2007 – The Distributed Management Task Force (DMTF®) today announced the acceptance of a draft specification submitted by leading virtualization companies targeting an industry standard format for portable virtual machines. Virtual machines packaged in this format can be installed on any virtualization platform that supports the standard – simplifying interoperability, security and virtual machine lifecycle management for virtual infrastructures.

The companies behind the collaboration on this specification include Dell, HP, IBM, Microsoft, VMware, and XenSource. This group of virtualization industry leaders has submitted the specification to the DMTF for development into an industry standard. DMTF is the industry organization leading the development, adoption and promotion of interoperable management initiatives and standards. DMTF will continue to develop this technology into a successful, open industry standard and promote it worldwide.

The proposed format, called the Open Virtual Machine Format (OVF), uses existing packaging tools to combine one or more virtual machines together with a standards-based XML wrapper, giving the virtualization platform a portable package containing all required installation and configuration parameters for the virtual machines. This allows any virtualization platform that implements the standard to correctly install and run the virtual machines.

“With the increasing demand for virtualization in enterprise management, the new spec developed through this industry-wide collaboration dove-tails nicely into existing virtualization management standardization activity within the DMTF,” said Winston Bumpus, DMTF president. “OVF extends the work we have underway to offer IT managers automation of critical, error-prone activities in the deployment of a virtualized infrastructure.”

Most importantly, OVF specifies procedures and technologies to permit integrity checking of the virtual machines (VM) to ensure that they have not been modified since the package was produced. This enhances the security of the format and will alleviate security concerns of users who adopt virtual appliances produced by third parties. OVF also provides mechanisms that support license checking for the enclosed VMs, addressing a key concern of both independent software vendors (ISVs) and customers. Finally, OVF allows an installed VM to acquire information about its host virtualization platform and run-time environment, which allows the VM to localize the applications it contains and optimize its performance for the particular virtualization environment.

“The impact of OVF will extend far beyond the participating server virtualization vendors to include the entire ISV community. With OVF, an ISV can potentially ship its solutions as a single virtual deployment package that is capable of running on any hypervisor,” said Chris Wolf, senior analyst with Burton Group. “OVF marks a new era in virtualization – one which includes never-seen-before interoperability in the enterprise. The whole IT community collectively stands to benefit from this landmark standard.”

In addition to providing portability, integrity, and configurability of existing virtual hard disk formats. OVF is also extensible to support future developments of virtual hard disk formats whose specifications are openly available.

By collaborating on the development of the OVF specification, the group aims to make it easier for IT organizations to pre-package and certify software packaged as virtual machine templates for deployment in their virtualized infrastructure and to facilitate the secure distribution of pre-packaged virtual appliances by ISVs and virtual appliance vendors. Ultimately, the group's goal is to eliminate the need for IT managers to separately install, configure and manage interdependencies between virtualized operating systems and applications, by enabling automated management of the virtual machine lifecycle.

"Dell is committed to simplifying virtualization management by working with the industry to develop standards which provide ease of deployment. The Open Virtual Machine Format submission is an important packaging format which will enable the simplified deployment of virtual appliances. We are pleased to contribute to the development of OVF as a major component of Dell's vision to Simplify IT," said Brent Schroeder, Director of Enterprise Software Technology at Dell, Inc.

"HP supports the creation of a vendor-agnostic standard to help our customers with the rollout and management of virtual appliances," said Paul Gottsegen, vice president of marketing, Enterprise Storage and Servers Software, HP. "This capability will become increasingly important as customers turn to automation solutions that take risk and cost out of data center operations."

"IBM is dedicated to helping our clients exploit the many benefits of virtualization with comprehensive solutions to manage their entire environments including virtual and physical machines and virtual appliances," said Rich Lechner, VP of IT Optimization for IBM. "The OVF proposal, by joining together key virtualization vendors, is an important step towards enabling client benefits while maintaining flexibility and allowing them freedom of vendor choice."

"Microsoft is committed to the interoperability of virtualization infrastructure, and we believe the DMTF is the best place to drive this type of industry standard," said Mike Neil, general manager of virtualization strategy at Microsoft Corp. "OVF complements Microsoft's open Virtual Hard Disk (VHD) format and the strong ecosystem of vendors that now support it. Microsoft continues to be an active member of the DMTF virtualization management efforts and we see the OVF as a natural extension of our existing standardization work in this area."

"VMware's participation in and contribution to the Open Virtual Machine Format (OVF) reinforces our commitment to open, industry standards for virtualization. The OVF specification and its key principles of interoperability and portability are intended to be an enabler to virtual appliances as well as to the evolution of the virtualization market. End users and software vendors have been clear that they need to be able to leverage standards such as OVF and avoid proprietary formats and licensing that lock them to a single vendor or platform," said Dr. Stephen Herrod, Vice President of Technology Development at VMware, Inc.

"XenSource has found that as virtualization becomes a mainstream component of enterprise IT infrastructure, customers need ways to automate and secure the development, distribution and deployment of their virtual machines and virtual appliances," said Simon Crosby, CTO of XenSource, Inc. "This collaboration between the leading virtualization vendors to develop a portable virtual machine format addresses a key customer concern - allowing them to broadly adopt multi-vendor virtualization solutions without worrying about differing proprietary formats. OVF also guarantees the integrity of virtual machines, while respecting the licensing policies of OS and application vendors."

About the DMTF

With more than 4,000 active participants representing 44 countries and nearly 200 organizations, the Distributed Management Task Force, Inc. (DMTF) is the industry organization leading the development, adoption and promotion of interoperable management standards and initiatives. DMTF management technologies are critical to enabling management interoperability among multi-vendor systems, tools, and solutions within the enterprise. By deploying solutions that support DMTF standards, IT managers can choose to deploy a mix of systems and solutions that best meet their users' needs, while reducing management complexity and total cost of ownership. Information about the DMTF technologies and activities can be found at www.dmtf.org.

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