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### VMware support still lacking among traditional SMB VARs

Recent feature additions and price reductions have made VMware Inc.'s virtualization software a more viable alternative for small and midsized businesses.

But to succeed, the company needs to win mindshare among the SMB VAR community, especially as Microsoft prepares to broaden a 20% deal registration bounty in October that rewards partners winning new virtualization business.

"We have laid our chips with Microsoft," said James Watson, CEO of [Northwest Computer Support](#), an IT solution provider in Seattle. This despite the fact that Watson freely admits that VMware has more robust virtualization technology than his long-time vendor partner, a fact that has prompted him to keep all of his VMware certifications as current as possible.

Those certifications are vital for supporting some of his high-end customers that have existing VMware implementations that they aren't likely to migrate anytime soon. But wherever possible, Northwest Computer Support leads with Microsoft's virtualization products.

"Microsoft's strategy of essentially giving away Hyper-V is the same strategy that worked for them when they overwhelmed Netscape," Watson said. "Unless you really need the high-end features, Microsoft has a really good case for its product."

Technology solution providers in both camps, however, say VMware's decision to add the VMotion live migration technology to both the Essentials Plus and Standard editions with the [VMware vSphere 4.1 release in July](#) is a significant move. This despite the higher pricing occasioned by that addition: Essentials Plus now costs \$3,495 for three hosts (up from \$2,995) and Standard is now priced at \$995 per processor (up from \$795).

"You are essentially getting everything that VMware offers," said Guy Baroan, president of [Baroan Technologies](#), a technology services company in Clifton, N.J., who is prioritizing VMware among his customers. Baroan says these packages now provide all the most important capabilities required to virtualize a small company's primary servers -- and provide them with backup and high-availability options.

Baroan acknowledges that the latest version of Hyper-V is a very good release that gives the smallest of companies similar virtualization tools for a lot less money. The trade-off is that Microsoft can require more hardware to implement a similar solution.. "We have to do both for the foreseeable future," he said.

That's not the position of Carl Mazzanti, CEO of [e-Mazzanti Technologies](#), a solution provider in Hoboken, N.J. "We have made the decision to go all Hyper-V," Mazzanti said. "With our value-conscious customer base, the reason to go Hyper-V is clear. With our embedded VMware customers, it will take some time and it will require proof-of-concept systems deployed, but I am confident that by going with Microsoft we are going to prevail."

Mazzanti's rationale is that by concentrating on its relationship with Microsoft, e-Mazzanti will be able to leverage certain support and software design resources to help design its virtualization solutions. He doesn't receive those same sort of resources from VMware, which he has seen subsidize some deals in order to win a customer.

"If you believe history, any time there is a market-changing product, Microsoft may not be the first to figure it

out, but they are so tenacious that they will eventually prevail," Mazzanti said. "They wait for the market to get big enough, and they come in and go after it and win it."

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