eBook

2020 Terminal Emulator Buyer's Guide

Rocket
LEGACY POWERS LEGENDARY

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Introduction

There's a lot of history between you and your terminal emulator. Like a friend, it's always there when you need it, its macros and scripts programmed exactly the way you (and your users) like them. As an essential tool in your kit, you overlook all the things you wish were better. And the hassle of finding and migrating to another, potentially better terminal emulator isn't worth it, right?

But could things be better? When you add up all the little pain points—the unexpected fees, a vendor who couldn't care less about you, ulcer-inducing licensing models, security concerns—it makes you wonder, "is this really the best I can do?"

So, you start wondering if it might be time to explore your options. The terminal emulation market may be mature, but vendors still release new service offerings and user experience improvements all the time. Knowing that, it might feel a little intimidating to start searching for a new terminal emulator with nothing to go on.

That's why we made this Buyer's Guide. It will help you fine tune your search, prioritize the features and services important to your organization, and get you closer to the emulator and partner that fits you. Finding the right solution starts with asking the right questions.

There are five major criteria to keep in mind as you begin your research:

1	2	3	4	5
Vendor	The total cost of ownership	The migration process	Administrative and security requirements	Future needs for host-access

Let's dive in!

1

Do they want to be your vendor, or your trusted partner?

A vendor should be grateful for your business, and treat you as a valued customer. They should recognize that you have options, and still chose them. But too many terminal emulation vendors have an unfortunate reputation for using forceful, hardline tactics when it comes to software license compliance. Customer-focused emulation vendors are few and far between, but they do exist. Look for an vendor with a reputation for working with customers as partners, and not simply focused on revenue.

Impartial review sites such as G2Crowd.com are a good source of verified reviews, helping you move beyond the marketing hype to get real feedback from real customers. When engaging with a potential vendor, always ask for customer references or case studies. Though the vendor will naturally direct you towards supportive customers, you have the opportunity to ask direct questions that can uncover hidden truths about the relationship.

Fortunately, there are terminal emulator vendors who not only care about you as a partner, but also care about ensuring products are current and deliver industry-leading functionality. Be careful not to fall for the first friendly vendor you meet! Do your due diligence. Get assurance the partner can keep your users and admin team happy. And always be sure to start with a trial of the solution.

Here are some questions to ask that can shed some light:

Does the vendor have the experience, expertise, and knowledge base to successfully help your organization migrate?

How responsive is their support team–is it global and available 24/7?

When you request a feature enhancement or a bug fix, what is their response? Is that request ever incorporated into future product development?

Do you have a closer relationship with their accounting team than their support or product teams?

Additionally, here are some vendor-specific questions that are important to consider:

What is the vendor's industry reputation?

How satisfied are their customers?

How many customers do they have?

Are products compatible with latest Windows operating system? What about non-Windows operating systems such as Chromebook?

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Does it reduce your total cost of ownership?

IT teams are constantly being asked to lower their expenses; to "drive better efficiency." They're challenged to do more with less, do it better, and do it all without burning out their team. Fine-tuning license agreements can be a great way to lower costs without losing resources or quality of solutions. The secret is in flexible licensing models and associated fees.

There are a few standard licensing models often seen in the world of terminal emulation. The size of your customer/user base and the number of hosts will help you determine which model makes the most sense for you.

Perpetual vs Subscription Licensing

Perpetual licensing gives you the use of a software program indefinitely. It's billed as a single cost in the first year, with a varying term of support service included (generally for the first year, but sometimes up to 3 years.) After that, you'll need to pay a maintenance fee to continue receiving support and software updates.

Subscription-based licensing allows companies to pay for access to a software platform for an allotted time, typically by month or year. The subscription license includes all updatess released while subscribed to the software, as well as access to support.

Perpetual models were historically used for software licensing but have fallen out of favor in recent years as subscriptions have grown in popularity. There are two reasons for this: the ease of transferring licenses to new users as needed, and the lower upfront cost. Determining if these reasons would motivate your organization can help determine the right licensing model for you.

Concurrent vs Named User Licensing

Concurrent user licensing allows companies to purchase a fixed number of licenses that can be shared between a number of users. Only one user per license can be in use at the same time, and users "check out" a license by logging into the terminal emulator. When the user logs out, the license is "checked in" to the pool so other users can access it. Concurrent licensing is most valuable when you have many users who need access to your terminal emulation solution, but fewer than half need access at any given time. The savings can be significant in this scenario over named user licensing.

Named user licensing provides one license to a specific individual and cannot be shared with other users. Typically, admins can transfer a named license to a new user when the original user leaves the company or changes roles. Named-user licensing is best for organizations where users need frequent-to-constant access to the host system.

Find a vendor that offers the licensing model that fits your company's needs. Keep in mind that many companies need more than one type of license; the right vendor will make it easy to purchase various license types—without giving you a hard time.

Unexpected Fees

Don't get caught off guard! Make a point of learning exactly what fees each terminal emulation vendor can charge. Many vendors don't make it clear that they charge additional fees for host access from multiple devices. They might also charge a fee for access using a virtualization solution such as those offered by Citrix and ZenApp. Explicitly asking vendors if they have additional charges for different access scenarios and devices is always a good idea.

You want to work with a vendor who is upfront about costs, and who will clearly explain their pricing so there are no surprises. If your users will be logging in from different devices, find a vendor who is device-agnostic when it comes to pricing. These vendors are often the most invested in helping customers achieve a lower total cost of ownership.

Points to consider for total cost of ownership

Perpetual vs Subscription Licensing

Concurrent vs Named User Licensing

Unexpected Fees

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Is the migration going to be a nightmare?

The idea of migrating to a new terminal emulator can seem daunting. After all, your users likely have numerous custom macros and scripts they've been using for years, or even decades. The thought of interrupting business operations or workflows isn't going to sit well with your manager, or your users, who might see it as an unnecessary effort in the first place.

A great terminal emulator vendor should anticipate those objections and have solid tools and processes in place to make the change as fast and painless as possible. Some will manage the entire migration process for you, including porting user macros and scripts into the new solution. Every terminal emulation vendor should be prepared to assist with migrations, but some certainly have a better track record than others.

Consider the immediate and long-term impacts of migrating. Choose a vendor who will work with you on the migration, possesses experience with your infrastructure, and can coordinate the migration without disruption. The start-to-finish migration timeline will also be a key consideration. Some vendors can do it in days or weeks, while others may need months. Get as much information about their migration process as you can up-front.

> **"** Seamless switch over from our current solution to the Rocket Terminal Emulator. Even migrating VBS macros was a breeze. Faster response times too! **"**
>
> G2Crowd Reviewer
> December 2018

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Does it satisfy all your administrative and security requirements?

When the IBM® System/360 mainframe was made available in 1964, no one could have predicted the life-altering impact of the internet 30 years later. Mainframes weren't developed to anticipate a networked population. Cybersecurity threats were effectively non-existent in the beginning, with the greatest threats arising from physical damage and people carrying data out of the office. Beyond guarding against in-person access to the hardware and environmental factors, security wasn't a primary concern.

Today, cybersecurity is a top concern for every enterprise organization. All it takes is one small hole in your security protocol for a malicious party to bring your organization to its knees. And believe it or not, your aging terminal emulator could be that hole.

Your terminal emulation vendor should take cybersecurity as seriously as you do, and should implement new protocols as soon as they're introduced. When getting to know a potential vendor, ask the tough questions. Without exception, security standards should include security proxy servers, SSL v3.0 and TLS v1.0, and other measures. In addition, the vendor shouldn't be dependent on Java applets or Active X, which have become increasingly vulnerable over time.

Your other administration objectives might also include ensuring compliance with industry or regulatory standards, and the terminal emulation solution should come with those capabilities built-in. Auditing terminal emulator usage for internal compliance is important, and helps you understand if your licensing capacity makes sense for your usage. It also helps you determine if your vendor is charging you appropriately.

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Can you access host systems anytime, anywhere, on any device?

There's a growing push to give employees anytime, anywhere access to enterprise applications and data, and there's no exception when it comes to mainframe and midrange systems. While improved productivity and user experience are obvious benefits, running emulators on less-expensive devices such as tablets and Chromebooks significantly reduces IT overhead compared to traditional Windows-based PCs. If your workforce is increasingly mobile, an emulator designed and optimized for mobile devices should be a requirement.

But even if you feel your organization doesn't need a dedicated mobile emulator right now, at least look for a vendor who has it on their roadmap. A focus on mobile demonstrates that the vendor is continuing to invest in their solution, which by extension means it won't be relegated to maintenance-only status anytime soon. On top of that, you can be assured that a mobile solution is ready and waiting when you and your users are ready.

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Rocket Software:
A Trusted Partner for Terminal Emulation

We hope this guide has helped you organize your search for the right terminal emulation partner. And while we're on the subject, we'd love the chance to prove we can be that partner for you! Rocket® Terminal Emulator solutions provide a cost-effective alternative to your aging emulator including:

- A lower total cost of ownership
- Flexible licensing with no hidden fees
- Assistance migrating custom macros and scripts from your current emulator
- A robust admin experience including a solid security strategy, no dependency on Java, and auditing capabilities
- Mobile access

Rocket is a trusted terminal emulation partner to companies worldwide who need access to mission-critical host systems. Our customer relationships are our number one priority; we develop our solutions and work with our customers with that in mind. But, don't take our word for it. Request a trial today.

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