



Branding Your Environment with Extentrrix Web Optimizer

July 2009

Introduction

Companies make great efforts to protect their visual identity or brand. The brand reinforces the company's message to customers, employees, and other organizations that they do business with. As these companies allow users and customers to use web based remote access and virtualization tools, they want to ensure that their brand is maintained for recognition and security purposes. However, these tools often carry the vendor's branding and make it difficult to change or customize the look and feel of the web interface. Third party tools are becoming available to assist in rebranding vendor web remote access and virtualization solutions.

The Psychology of Branding

Companies are represented by their appearance or branding. It is the look and feel of their message, how the customer or employee sees and thinks about the company & products, and a visual reference that easily identifies the company. A lot of effort and money is spent developing both the message and the visual appearance to define a company's brand. Therefore, it is important to ensure that anything the company presents or displays should be consistent with the branding.

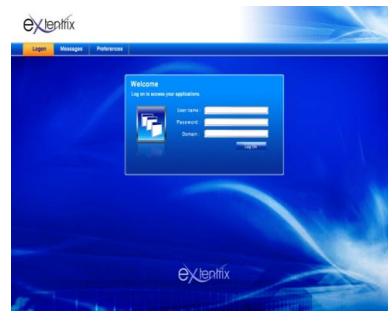


Figure1. Extending the company logo into the company website.

A key benefit of branding is to help customers develop an emotional attachment to a company. Branding builds a feeling of trust. This trust serves to keep the company brand in the minds of customers, instead of any competitors, when requiring related products or services. This is especially important for web portals that access or contain confidential data, for example, a banking site. When accessing a web portal, the customer feels more comfortable using the company's online services when the brand and message is directly visible; they know they are at the correct web site and can trust it.

Employees are thought of as being a company's "Brand Ambassadors", the people that help promote the company's message to the public. Unfortunately, studies show that less than 30% of company employees really know what their company stands for and take pride in what it

markets.¹ Thus, it is vital for the company to educate employees about the brand message by exposing them to the message whenever possible. An effective way of doing this is by branding all web based remote access and virtualization tools that the employees will use.

The Security of Branding

Software companies spend a lot of time and effort to making sure that the products they sell display their company branding. Citrix Systems, Inc. is very good at doing this. All Citrix products reflect their leadership position in application virtualization by always displaying the Citrix logo and design themes (Figure 2).

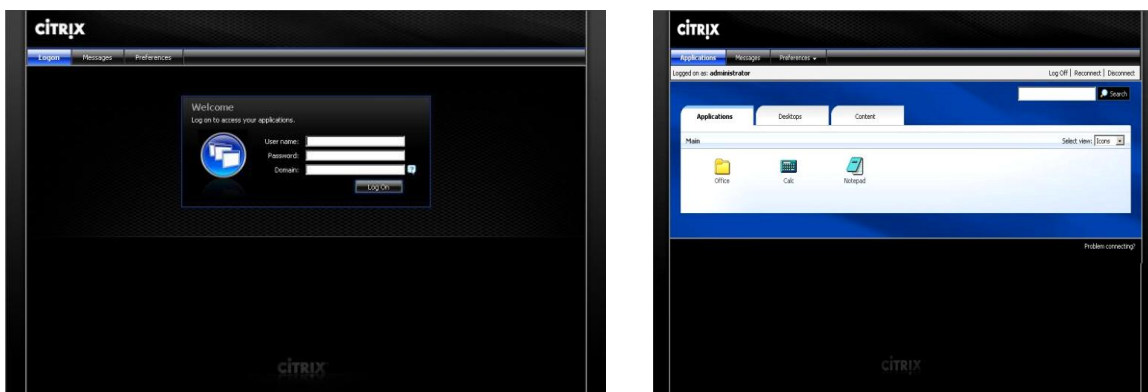


Figure 2. Citrix branding within the XenApp web portal.

In enterprise environments, displaying the vendor branding can cause brand confusion. For example, customers may get confused when using an SSLVPN product such as Citrix Secure Access Gateway™ to access a secure financial site. Seeing the Citrix logo when logging into the web portal instead of the logo of the financial institution could cause the customer to terminate the session because they are unfamiliar with what Citrix does.

There is a potential security issue when using web based remote access and virtualization tools with strong vendor branding. The vendor branding easily identifies the vendor and the tool used. A malicious user would be able to research and exploit any vulnerability associated with the vendor tools. The best way to protect against attack is to remove the vendor branding, making it more difficult for the malicious user to discover what tools are being used.

However, many vendor tools can be difficult to customize. Expertise in HTML, .NET, PHP, or JavaScript is usually required. Understanding the design and logic of how the portal pages interact can be difficult if not properly documented. Many enterprises forgo customizing the

¹ William J. McEwen, "Don't Neglect Your Brand Ambassadors", *Gallup Management Journal*, 9 August 2007, Gallup, Inc., 12 June 2009 <<http://gmj.gallup.com/content/28300/Dont-Neglect-Your-Brand-Ambassadors.aspx>>.

branding of tools because it is too difficult. There is also the concern that security could be affected if any code or scripts related to authentication or verification are incorrectly modified.

Branding with the Extentrix Web Optimizer

The Extentrix Web Optimizer for Citrix XenApp™ is a simple and effective Windows application that can quickly customize the look and feel of any Citrix web portal and implement company branding. Applications that can be modified using the Web Optimizer include Citrix Web Interface for XenApp™. Support for Microsoft Terminal Server Web Access, Citrix Access Gateway, and Citrix Login Points will be available in a forthcoming release.

Using predefined templates (figure 3) and the ability to modify all aspects of the design using the intuitive user interface (figure 4), branding can be implemented in a short period of time by quickly changing objects such as

- Header and footer image, color, height, and text.
- Background image or color.
- Navigation bar background images and colors.
- Text color.
- Box image and color.
- Button image and color.



Figure 3. Standard templates are available to get started quickly.

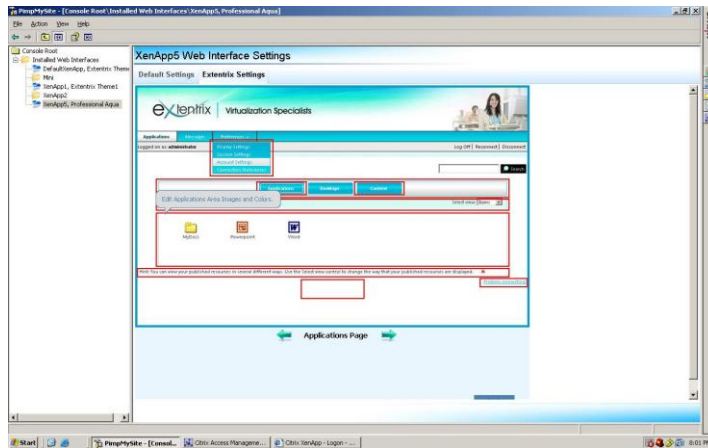


Figure 4. Clicking through the intuitive GUI makes branding easy.

Graphics can be easily uploaded and activated (figure 5a) allowing the default interface (figure 5b) to change into new designs quickly (figure 5c).

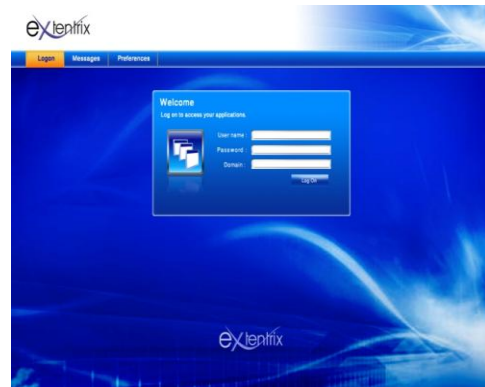
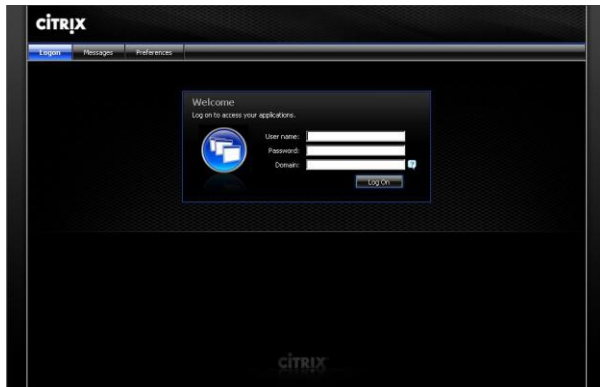
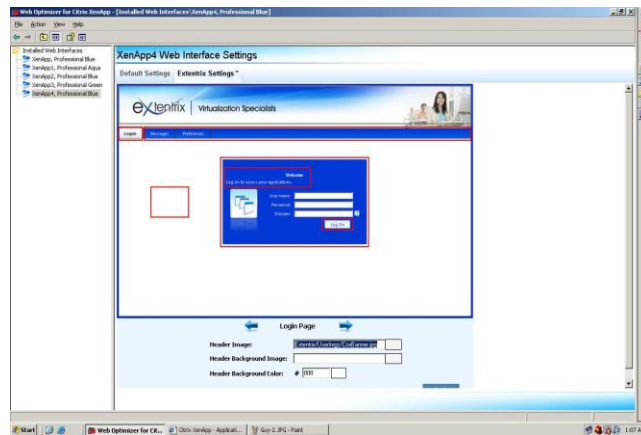


Figure 5 Easy uploading of graphics (5a) allows quick customizing of the portal login screen (5b) with company branding (5c).

When customization is complete, the Web Optimizer automatically generates secure code to ensure none of the portal functions are compromised. This code can be modified either manually or by using the Web Optimizer. More advanced customization can be provided through Extentrix Consulting Services which would allow seamless integration to the corporate web portal or other applications such as mobile devices and Virtual Secure Keyboards (figure 6).



Figure 6. Advanced customization converts Citrix XenApp (6a) into a company web portal (6b)

Conclusion

The ability to quickly customize the default Citrix web portal look and feel allows a company to easily display its own branding. Brand recognition is greatly increased because the corporate messaging is always visible to customers, employees, and business partners. Brand confusion is almost completely removed as no evidence of the vendor branding remains. The customer is sure of the company site being accessed, whether using SSLVPN or web portal. The branding message is also continually reinforced to employees each time they access an application.

Security is improved since the custom site has little trace of the vendor branding. This makes it more difficult for the malicious user to determine what vendor's web based remote access and virtualization tools are being used. Without knowing the vendor or tool, finding vulnerabilities becomes more difficult.

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