
Subject: IDL Virtual Machine Woes

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Mon, 17 Nov 2008 20:15:31 GMT

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Folks,

I hate to bother you again with this unending saga, but I've been working three weeks now to create a CD that will run my IDL application on a Windows, UNIX, and Macintosh machine and I am still without joy.

Yes, I *can* follow directions, but unlike the set-up in the IDL documentation, my binaries are not all on the same network. In fact, I have three separate machines, at three corners of a triangle with sides that can be measured in miles (45 miles for one leg of the triangle). That seems to be complicating things for me.

I have been able to produce a CD that can run on Windows and UNIX machines, and another than can run on Windows and Macintosh machines, but so far not a single CD (and God knows when I bought 100 I thought I had enough!) that can run on all three.

Can someone provide *explicit* directions on how to do this?

I *presume* the problem comes when I try to transfer the files to/from the Mac and Linux machines. (No problem with Windows, as always. :-)

I wish to burn these CDs on a Linux machine, so I have been trying to get the entire CD distribution on the Linux machine. When I transfer the Mac bits and pieces to Linux (with a memory stick), the resulting CD does not run on Macs (a window opens and closes too fast for me to figure out what the error is).

If I tar up the Mac distribution and transfer that to the Linux box, I get complaints from my Linux machine to the effect that when it encountered the apple script stuff, it expected a file and ran into a folder, do I want to SKIP this. My choices are abort the transfer or skip, so I skip.

So, any ideas?

I'm about to go with the idea of just putting my save file on the CD and directions that say, in effect, go get your own damn IDL Virtual Machine! And good luck doing it!

But I still have the tiniest bit of hope I can somehow get this to work.

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming (www.dfanning.com)
Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

Subject: Re: IDL Virtual Machine Woes
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 19 Nov 2008 16:45:38 GMT
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Heinz Stege writes:

> From my sight of view the VM is a great plus of IDL. It allows me to
> give my algorithms to the customers. They can run my programs
> themself. With *their* parameters, on *their* machines and without
> paying for an extra license. I would not like to miss this option.

Yeah, but here is my question, Heinz: How do they do that? :-)

I get the feeling people think I am messing with their heads here, but I am trying to write clear instructions for someone who knows absolutely nothing about IDL that will enable them to install an IDL Virtual Machine and run a program. Can anyone point (or write) to these clear instructions?

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.
Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.
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Subject: Re: IDL Virtual Machine Woes
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 19 Nov 2008 17:26:56 GMT

David Fanning writes:

> Heinz Stege writes:

>

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>

> Yeah, but here is my question, Heinz: How do they do that? :-)

>

> I get the feeling people think I am messing with their heads
> here, but I am trying to write clear instructions for someone
> who knows absolutely nothing about IDL that will enable
> them to install an IDL Virtual Machine and run a program.
> Can anyone point (or write) to these clear instructions?

I note, parenthetically, that I haven't heard back from ITTVIS
Technical Support about this topic yet, either. I assume the
delay means I haven't just overlooked something that is prominently
displayed on their web page.

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

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Subject: Re: IDL Virtual Machine Woes

Posted by [Heinz Stege](#) on Wed, 19 Nov 2008 17:29:55 GMT

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On Wed, 19 Nov 2008 09:45:38 -0700, David Fanning wrote:

> Heinz Stege writes:

>

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>> give my algorithms to the customers. They can run my programs
>> themselves. With **their** parameters, on **their** machines and without
>> paying for an extra license. I would not like to miss this option.

>

> Yeah, but here is my question, Heinz: How do they do that? :-)

>

In a very simple and basic way: They download and install the IDL-version from the ITTVIS website. Including the IDLDE, which will run in the demo-mode only. My save-files are small enough to be send by e-mail. The customer copies the save-file into any directory of his choice and starts the program by double-clicking.

This is working for Windows OS. Up to now nobody was asking for a Linux or Mac version.

Greetings, Heinz

Subject: Re: IDL Virtual Machine Woes

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 19 Nov 2008 17:36:11 GMT

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Heinz Stege writes:

> In a very simple and basic way: They download and install the
> IDL-version from the ITTVIS website. Including the IDLDE, which will
> run in the demo-mode only. My save-files are small enough to be send
> by e-mail. The customer copies the save-file into any directory of
> his choice and starts the program by double-clicking.
>
> This is working for Windows OS. Up to now nobody was asking for a
> Linux or Mac version.

Well, goodness, *everything* works in Windows. That's why I like it.** :-)

We should have a contest. A case of Fort Collin's own Fat Tire for anyone who can write clear directions for installing an IDL Virtual Machine on three platforms: WINDOWS (I'll take this), LINUX, and MACINTOSH, and make it run an arbitrary IDL save file.

Here are the criteria. (1) My wife has to follow the instructions. (2) My wife does NOT have administrator privileges on her machine (for obvious reasons).

Have a go! If you send a picture with your entry, I'll even arrange to make you famous for a week. ;-)

Cheers,

David

** I'm, of course, not talking about Vista here.

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

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Subject: Re: IDL Virtual Machine Woes

Posted by [greg.addr](#) on Thu, 20 Nov 2008 11:08:48 GMT

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> Here are the criteria. (1) My wife has to follow the
> instructions. (2) My wife does NOT have administrator
> privileges on her machine (for obvious reasons).

Hi David,

I use the VM rather a lot. I was scared off the make_rt business after not more than a very cursory experimentation. It suits me better to distribute just the .sav file and some supporting data - there's much less to go wrong. I have the users install the VM from the full installation file. I know my applications work on Windows/Linux; I haven't tested any on Macs.

I think your condition (2) is unfair - a lack of administrator privileges is **supposed** to prevent you from installing stuff, isn't it? But the VM only has to be installed once. That's not such a great price, I find.

cheers,
Greg

Subject: Re: IDL Virtual Machine Woes

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 20 Nov 2008 14:49:56 GMT

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greg.addr@googlemail.com writes:

> I think your condition (2) is unfair - a lack of administrator
> privileges is **supposed** to prevent you from installing stuff, isn't
> it? But the VM only has to be installed once. That's not such a great
> price, I find.

Apparently, you are not working for a government agency with

a home directory allocation that would have thrilled you in 1978, but seems paltry indeed in 2008. :-)

Look, I have, obviously, been explaining myself poorly lately. I **know** how to create the ~50MB VM installations for the platforms I am interested in. I can even package them up and stage them on my anonymous FTP site for people to download. You do NOT have to have administer privileges to install them. Nor do you have to register to receive more e-mail.

But I have two MAJOR gripes about this:

- (1) Why do **I** have to allocate storage space, arrange for downloads, and create a web page to allow people to install an ITTVIS Virtual Machine!? Good thing my son decided to buy a Macintosh when he went to college or I would **still** be looking for a way to create a Macintosh VM. If I was still working from home, I would have had no way to build the LINUX VM that a large percentage of my potential customers want to use.
- (2) In live tests, with real target audiences, I have discovered that no matter how much time you spend writing clear instructions for starting the darn thing up, people cannot do it a depressingly large percentage of the time. (Yes, I know MAKE_RT can build the scripts necessary to run a **particular** save file, but surely I don't want to have to ship another VM each time I want my customer to run another save file from me. I want a way of starting the VM to run **any** save file. And I want to do it with having to instruct the user to go down into the bowels of this directory I just gave you and double click this particular file whose name is similar to dozens of similar files in the directory. You think I may be joking about how hard this is for some people, but I assure you I am not.)

I am just saying that if ITTVIS wanted us to use the Virtual Machine to distribute IDL save files to customers (and I am pretty sure they do not), then they would have provided a way for **my** customers to do a non-administrative install of a Virtual Machine of a type appropriate for whatever computer **my customer** had (and not **me**) and an easy way for my customer to run the darn thing.

Enough said. I've moving on. Three weeks is too long to fool around with this. And I'm not sure anyone is really using the Virtual Machine anyway.

Cheers,

David

P.S. My original idea what the *my* customer would become *their* customer by seeing what neat software they could run. But I am re-thinking this entire plan. Maybe I'll write an iTool and distribute that instead. :-)

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

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Subject: Re: IDL Virtual Machine Woes

Posted by [greg.addr](#) on Fri, 21 Nov 2008 08:06:28 GMT

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I agree with your gripes. A VM is not a VM if it only supports one .sav file - it's just part of an executable. If they wanted to do it that way, it would have been preferable to package the whole lot into a single executable (or one for each platform). Since this is not a current possibility, I think the only way to keep both yourself and your users sane is to have them install the full VM. Otherwise, I just can't imagine how to cope with explaining what to do with an update, or yet worse - how to revert to a previous version. Do that to someone just once, and from then on you'll hear curses about anything that whiffs of IDL. The VM ought to be more easily accessible - perhaps they don't realise how much of a disincentive the registration process is. Although I believe, for those fortunate to live beyond the thrills of 1978, there's no reason you shouldn't distribute it yourself.

cheers,
Greg
