



ARTICLE

The Sixth Flag adds support for Google ChromeBook and ChromeBox

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Summary: The Sixth Flag cut its teeth in the DaaS market by provided secure hosted desktops to the defense industry. It's not planning on stopping there.

Details: Desktop-as-a-Service (DaaS) provider The Sixth Flag (TSF) has expanded support for Google ChromeBook and ChromeBox. In the next release, the company will add more security features, including two-factor authentication. TSF provides a proprietary DaaS orchestration tool that lets IT administrators deliver HTML-rendered Windows, accessible from OS X and Linux desktops to laptops, PCs, thin clients, tablets, and now, ChromeBooks and ChromeBoxes. Users can access their desktops through most major browsers, including: Firefox, Chrome, Safari and Internet Explorer.

More details: The platform is designed to be highly secure, which is important to its primary customers in the defense industry. For authentication, TSF is compatible with Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML), and can integrate with an organization's internal Active Directory settings. Each desktop session that a user logs into is also destroyed after they log out, so that any malware that did make its way on to the virtual desktop are eliminated. All data is also encrypted at rest in a separate data store. In addition, all persistent user credentials are replaced with randomly generated ones at the time of login, so that if a session is compromised by malware, those credentials are useless to would-be hackers. Finally, TSF has developed two proprietary and patented technologies – cleanroom.tsf and dewdrop.tsf. Cleanroom.tsf essentially provides a sealed workspace environment which allows IT administrators to restrict what content users can print, download or copy from each session. Dewdrop.tsf is a watermarking technology that can help prevent users from capturing sensitive data through screen captures or photography. It works like this: when a watermark-enforced user logs into their desktop session, a dot-encoded pattern is overlaid on the workspace that records the user, date, time and IP address related to that session, thereby allowing IT administrators to track any potential data breaches caused by negligent or unethical employees or contractors. The company recently has made improvements in Dewdrop.tsf to make the dot-patterns less intrusive to the end user experience.

Company details: Raleigh, NC-based TSF was founded by CEO Peter Kofod and CTO David Kinghorn in 2012 and its DaaS platform was released in March 2015. TSF's DaaS platform is offered at a per month/user subscription pricing model and is available in five continents on top of AWS cloud infrastructure. The company has four employees and anywhere from three to six part-time staff at any given time. The Sixth Flag now has several paying customers, mostly in the defense industry and with around 20-50 seats deployed. The company claims it is now in talks with customers that are interested in deploying between 200-500 seats, and that its accounts are expanding out of the defense industry. The Sixth Flag has taken no venture funding.

Angle: Although TSF originally focused on the defense industry, the company claims it has winning customers in other verticals, including a medical device company that wanted the added support for secure and inexpensive ChromeBooks for employees that conduct field visits. TSF claims that it is not competing directly with Citrix and VMware, because those companies are more enterprise focused. Instead, TSF says it is coming up against more traditional systems integrators and hosters that are reselling Citrix and VMware, and that its value proposition is its pay-as-you-go subscription pricing model that doesn't force customers to commit to long and expensive contracts. While that makes sense, TSF will face much competition from other relative newcomers in the rapidly growing DaaS market. Itopia and nGenx, in particular, are gaining meaningful traction, and have built solid proprietary DaaS automation and orchestration platforms that MSP and CSP partners can use to get customers up and running quickly. Yet, TSF's particular focus on security could be a key differentiator in an increasingly crowded DaaS market.