

Tips

Why is it so SLOW

By Jaco Botha

You are used to working on your LAN and accessing files on a networked drive is really fast. When you connect remotely you are using a much slower link so access speeds will be slower. Even worse, when you are connected over a link with longer latency like GPRS wireless, you may not be able to work in the same way as you would in the office.

One common problem is that of opening a file directly from a shared network drive while connected using a slow link. In this case the application opens a temporary file on the same network folder and you have to wait for ages while the file is copied and opened.

The alternative to double clicking on the file you want to edit is to make a local copy on your PC - edit the file and then copy it back to your server. I'm connected. Now what?

By Gerrie Roos

It often happens that people download, install and successfully configure @TheOffice without any problems and then when they connect, nothing happens…they don't know what to do.

The confusion probably comes in when people compare @TheOffice with Remote Desktop applications, such as GoToMyPC. When you establish a connection with a Remote Desktop application, it's quite obvious what happens: you get presented with a screen that represents the desktop of the PC you are connecting with and you can quite obviously start working on that PC.

Well, nothing specific is supposed to happen when you connect with @TheOffice. It's just like plugging your PC into your Office Network. You actually need to start using the network. Some things that you might want to try when connected:

- Access your Email – If your email client is already configured to send and receive email from your Office's mail server, you can do it now.
- Access your Office File Server – You can access shares on your Windows Office Server or other people's Windows PC's directly by clicking ‘Start->Run…’ and typing \\servername where you substitute ‘servername’ with the name of the server or PC whose shares you want to access.
- Access Mapped Drives – You can now access any drives you have mapped to shares on your Office Network. If you haven't got any mapped drives, now is a good time to do it.
- Browse your Network Neighborhood – You can now see all the other Windows PC's in your Domain or Office Workgroup. You might need to join your PC to the Domain or Workgroup first!
- Access your Intranet – If you've got some internal Web services running, e.g. a browser-based CRM system, you can fire up your browser and start to use it.
- Connect to another PC's desktop – Remote Desktop software such as Microsoft Terminal Services and VNC works very well with @TheOffice. Since your PC is now virtually in your Office Network, you won't need any special firewall rules to make it work.
- Synchronise your Calendar – If you are using some Calendar/Diary software such as Outlook that needs to stay in sync with the rest of your Office, you can now tell it to synchronize.
- Telnet or SSH to another machine – You can now safely telnet or SSH to another machine without having to configure any other firewall rules.

What other interesting uses have you had for @TheOffice? Windows Logon (GINA) Integration

By Gerrie Roos

Many of our customers wanted to know if it is possible to connect your PC to your office even before you do your Windows (Ctrl-Alt-Del) Logon. This would then make it very easy to log onto your PC with your Domain Credentials, since the connected PC can authenticate you on your Office Domain. In response we have developed a package that slots into your Windows Logon Mechanism (using GINA). When you then do ‘Ctrl-Alt-Del’ to log on, it will show a dialog that you can use to establish an @TheOffice connection before you supply your logon credentials. Sounds exciting? A beta version is available and we need people to try it out! Contact us if you are interested. @TheOffice vs The Others

By Gerrie Roos

People often email me asking to explain why @TheOffice is better than Product XYZ. Recently a customer had to make a choice between LogMeIn and @TheOffice and I penned down my thoughts on that.

I've played around with other Remote Desktop and Remote Access products for a while and there's many great products out there. What I want to emphasize, however, is how @theOffice differs from products like LogMeIn and GotoMyPC. In a nutshell:

LogMeIn gives you a desktop or a view on a PC while @theOffice puts a PC into a remote network.

The difference here is subtle, but quite important when deciding what to use in your situation. Let me give you an example or two.

Fred has a PC in his office that's his to work on. He comes in every day and logs in on that PC. Now he reads some email, edits some files on the general file server, etc. When he gets home at 18h00, and after he's had dinner, he remembers he still has to send an email. So he uses LogMeIn to access his PC at work. Now it's as if he was really sitting in front of his PC at work. He can send the email and he's done. The same applies when Fred is traveling overseas and occasionally uses an Internet Cafe to put himself temporarily behind his PC in the office.

Note that in this and similar situations, Fred does not really carry with him the PC that he accesses. He needs to be logged in with LogMeIn to get something done. Maybe he does carry around a notebook with him, but then it's usually just to access the Internet so that he can use LogMeIn. If he's using an email client on the notebook, it will not automatically be in sync with his email client on the PC he accesses in the office.

Joe has a notebook PC he takes everywhere with him. He's a salesman and only visits his office a couple of days per month. When there, he plugs his notebook directly into the office network. He's got an email account on the office's server and a Windows Domain logon to access shared files and servers. When traveling, Joe needs to access his office's email server from time to time. He also needs to access files on the file server. There's no PC dedicated to him that's always in the office. So he uses @theOffice to put his traveling notebook in the office. Then his email client can access the mail server, he can open files on the file server and also copy them to his local hard drive so that he can work on them even when his notebook PC doesn't have internet access.

Joe doesn't have the problem of more than one email client being out of sync. His notebook PC is the only PC he really uses and it's got the ability to be plugged into his office network from anywhere. When Joe needs access to another PC's desktop that's in his office, he can use @theOffice to put his notebook in the office, and then Windows Remote Desktop or VNC to get a view on that PC.

Whatever your Remote Access requirements are at this stage, I hope this will help you get a better understanding of where @theOffice might fit your requirements. Do you want the remote users to access a specific PC's desktop? Do you also want to let them use their own remote PC's as if they're in your network, e.g. for email purposes? Have you maybe got some other centralized database application that's the primary reason for the remote access?

From a security perspective, I'd like to point out that with LogMeIn the traffic goes through one of their own servers. It also appears as if the SSL sessions from the Client and Server both terminate on their server. This means you are forced to trust LogMeIn that they are not looking at the plaintext data as the server passes it on from the one SSL endpoint to the other. You also have to hope that their servers never get compromised by an attacker that then listens in at this point. With @theOffice, the secure connection is directly from the Client to the Gateway. It does not pass through any of Trispen's servers and there's no point in between where the traffic is in plaintext.

Let me also clear up a possible misunderstanding you might have regarding who you log in as with @theOffice. Remember that @theOffice puts your PC into the office network on the IP level. It does nothing more. It does not log you into a Windows Network or PC. You can do that separately after establishing your @theOffice connection. The Gateway just uses your Domain Credentials as an access control mechanism to decide whether to allow your connection or not. You can be logged in as any user on the PC you are connecting with. When connecting, you just need to supply valid Domain credentials that's just used as a check by the Gateway. After that, if you try to access a Domain resource and you're not logged in as a Domain User on that PC, you will be prompted for credentials. At this point, once again, any valid Domain credentials will do; they need not be the same ones that you used to connect with.

So from the above, I hope you understand @theOffice is not necessarily better, just different (except for the possible security issue mentioned above, where it's better :). If this is not enough information to help you make up your mind, explain to me your specific needs and maybe we can come up with a good solution.