

Broken Remote Desktop? Check Your Display Drivers

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I confess I can't live without RDP (Remote Desktop Protocol). Coupled with a VPN it is an effective way to work from home on my high powered office workstation. In fact, on a recent road trip to St. Louis while my wife was driving, I used my Verizon Blackberry tethered to a laptop to connect to my VPN and RDP to my desktop at work. I managed to handle email and write most of an 8 page document. Such things were not even possible 3 or 4 years ago. Telling this to my mom and dad makes them think I'm Captain Kirk (I keep telling them that Picard is better - Kirk's screens and dials were all analog). I prefer RDP to everything else I've tried - including log me in, go to my pc, pcan anywhere and VNC.

Anyway, Nicole (our creative director) and I had a similar problem. Her RDP stopped working completely after a windows update. For her, the login screen would not even appear - and no error either. It would just return to the host name box immediately. For me the login would appear and I enter my password to login - but then the process would lock up and I would have to wait a few minutes for the whole thing to time out without ever successfully getting in.

Googling around I found that a lot of folks had problems like this and their solutions seem to focus on display drivers (NVidia in particular). I have a 3 monitor setup and I use 2 NVidia cards - so this seemed likely to me. Checking with Nicole she too was using Nvidia drivers. To fix it, she *downgraded* her recent drivers one version. I took the opposite approach and simply "upgraded" my drivers to the next version - and that solved my issue.

When you think about it I suppose it makes sense that display drivers can cause RDP issues - since RDP renders the desktop for you. But it was not something on my radar. Now I have something to look for if it happens again.