



Desktop Multiplier

Userful®'s 1-Box Multi-Station Software System

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INTRODUCTION

Desktop Multiplier is a set of standard Linux software packages that extend the X Window System to support up to 10 fully independent and concurrent workstations using a single computer box. This is accomplished by adding standard video cards, USB keyboards and mice to a single PC system and adding Useful software. Desktop Multiplier is compatible with all single and dual-headed video cards supported by X.Org/XFree86 and has been tested on most major 2.6 kernel Linux distributions (see *supported systems* for details).

Desktop Multiplier is delivered as a single zip file containing either a .RPM or .DEB package and supports a variety of Linux distributions.

Utilities package

This package includes programs, scripts and config files for system configuration, keyboard/mouse assignment and device hot-plug capabilities. Files are named:

- 1box-utils-k26-<version>.i386.rpm (For RPM package-based systems)
- 1box-utils-k26-<version>.i386.deb (For DEB package-based systems)

Multi-station X server package

This package contains the Useful Multi-Station X-Server, which supports multiple simultaneous local users. Files are named:

- 1box-server-xorg-<version>.i386.rpm (For RPM package based systems)
- 1box-server-xorg-<version>.i386.deb (For DEB package based systems)

DualView functionality

Desktop Multiplier's DualView functionality enables each station to support up to five users, with each user having an individual desktop workspace that spans two monitors. You can configure monitors to use DualView during the Desktop Multiplier installation process. Note that the two monitors that display a DualView desktop must be connected to the same video card.

Trial Version

Desktop Multiplier will operate as a trial version until you purchase an appropriate license for your Useful system. You may purchase a multi-station license from your Useful representative or from Useful.com – see the Licensing section below for details.

Limitations of Trial Version: The Desktop Multiplier trial software supports up to 10 concurrent stations (depending on your specific hardware) and will typically display a brief registration reminder on all attached screens every 20 minutes or so.

Requirements for Desktop Multiplier

Hardware Requirements

Hard Disk

- Installation: 13 MB
- Running: 13 MB

Processor

- 400 MHz processor or better

Memory

- Minimum: 192 MB
- Recommended: 256 MB for two stations
- 64 MB for each additional station on multi-station installations

Supported Linux Distributions

Desktop multiplier supports most Linux distributions running kernel version 2.6 or greater. If you do not have Linux installed, please download our complete Desktop Server™ solution (from <http://userful.com/products/ds>), which delivers a complete multi-station Linux O/S distribution.

The following Linux distributions are currently supported:

RPM Based Distributions

- Fedora Core 2 & 3 & 4
- SuSE 9.1 & 9.3
- Mandrake 10.0 & 10.1
- Novell Linux Desktop 9 & 10
- Red Hat Enterprise Linux WS
- CentOS 4.0

DEB Based Distributions

- Ubuntu 5.04, 5.10
- Linspire 5.0
- Xandros v3
- Debian 3.1 (Sarge)

NOTE: Desktop Multiplier may work with other Linux distributions that use the Linux 2.6 kernel, however distributions other than those listed above, are not officially supported by Useful at this time. Instructions for installing Desktop Multiplier on a non-supported distribution are available at <http://userful.com/products/dm-config>

Official support for additional Linux distributions will be available in future versions of this software. Please address specific requests for supporting an additional Linux distribution via email to support@userful.com.

Note for Debian 3.1 (Sarge): By default, Debian Sarge uses the Linux 2.4 kernel by default with new installations, so you must upgrade the Linux kernel to 2.6 before you install Desktop Multiplier.

Userful Control Panel

The graphical interface to control various aspects of Desktop Multiplier can be launched from the icon labeled “Userful”. This icon can be found in the main menu of most distributions. The actual location varies, but is usually in “Accessories” or “System Tools”. The Python Gtk module is required to use this interface. This module is available on most distributions and is called “python-gtk”. It is installed by default on Fedora Core, Ubuntu and Mandrake. On some distributions, such as Novell Linux Desktop 9, the module is only installed when the Gnome desktop is chosen as the default desktop during installation.

Additional Hardware

Desktop Multiplier supports the following optional hardware components:

- Maximum five dual head video cards
- Up to 10 USB keyboards, mice and optional extension cables
- 10 monitors and optional extension cables and adapters
- USB hubs to support devices (powered hubs are strongly recommended)

Choosing a Graphics Card

Desktop Multiplier is designed to support all single and dual-headed video cards, supported by X.Org/XFree86. Any video card combinations where you can start X in multi-headed mode (i.e. multi-monitor, multi-display) should work with Desktop Multiplier. Xinerama extensions are not used, so any standard single-head or multi-head video card should work.

We recommend disabling on-board video in the BIOS if your motherboard includes an on-board video chipset. If the on-board video is not disabled, boot messages will be displayed on that video output. If no monitor is connected to the on-board video output, these boot messages will not be visible. The on-board video may be able to support a workstation depending on the model and revision of your motherboard.

Note: Although heterogeneous (mixed) combinations do often work, to ensure a simple and manageable computing environment, we recommend using a consistent model and revision of graphics cards and monitors for your Desktop Multiplier system. We suggest searching the following third-party database for heterogeneous graphics card combinations that should work under Linux:

<http://www.realtimesoft.com/multimon/search.asp>

Useful supports and recommends the following low cost single chip, dual head chipsets, which are available as AGP, PCI or PCI-E cards from a variety of manufacturers:

- ATi Radeon 7000, 7500, 9000, 9200 series and X300.)
- Matrox G400, G450, G550 (see Note below)
- NVIDIA GeForce MX 440, FX5200 and 6600 GT. Quadro FX 500/600 (see Note below)

Typically a 10 station system with one monitor each can be built using five dual head video cards.

Note : The default "mga/nv" display drivers included with X.Org/XFree86 do not provide adequate multi-head support. To use dual head Matrox or NVIDIA video cards, download the latest versions of these drivers from the following sites:

- <http://www.matrox.com/mga/support/drivers/latest/home.cfm>
- <http://www.nvidia.com/content/drivers/drivers.asp>

Supported Video Cards for Dual View

The following video cards have been successfully tested with Dual View in our lab. Note that the Dual View is only supported on ATI and nVidia cards at this time. If you require Dual View support for specific ATI/nVidia cards not in the list, please contact us at support@userful.com

- ATI - Radeon 7000, 7500, 9200, X300 (PCI-E)
- NVIDIA - GeForce MX440, FX5200, 6600 (PCIE) and Quadro FX 500/600

Installing Desktop Multiplier

Requirements

Prior to installing Desktop Multiplier on your existing Linux system, you will need to add enough video cards and USB ports to provide a video head for each station. We recommend using USB keyboards with an integrated USB hub to easily connect each station's mouse (and other USB devices) to minimize the number of devices connected to the central system. If a USB hub is required, be sure to use a powered hub. Non-powered hubs may not provide sufficient power for all connected devices. Similarly if you need to use extension cables, ensure that the distance between keyboard or other USB device and computer/powerd hub is not greater than 3 m (10 ft).

Note: If you are not currently running a 1-Box supported Linux distributions, you can optionally download our 1-Box Desktop Server software (4 CD set), which provides a complete, multi-station Linux operating system (based on Fedora Core).

Installation Process

Step 1: Download latest software from <http://userful.com/download/>

To install Desktop Multiplier follow the following steps

Step 2: Position one USB keyboard and mouse combination for each workstation.

(Note: the built-in system PS/2 keyboard and mouse connections can be used to connect one station.)

- Connect all cables to the back of the computer where you have installed the Desktop Multiplier software, including Ethernet, monitors, USB keyboards and mice, printers, etc.
- Power on all monitors and then turn on the multiplier computer.

Step 3: Unzip the demo software on the target computer. { unzip Desktop-Multiplier.zip }

Step 4: Run the INSTALL script as "root". { sh [[/path/]]INSTALL }

The INSTALL script will **not** overwrite existing X.Org/XFree86 configuration files. Optionally, you can install the Desktop Multiplier software manually. To install the Desktop Multiplier demo, run the following commands as "root":

For RPM based system:

```
rpm -Uvh lbox-utils-k26-<version>.i386.rpm  
rpm -Uvh lbox-server-xorg-<version>.i386.rpm
```

For DEB package based system:

```
dpkg -i lbox-utils-k26-<version>.i386.deb
```



```
dpkg -i lbox-server-xorg-<version>.i386.deb
```

After the Desktop Multiplier demo software installation has completed, you will need to reboot the computer to begin the automated configuration process and enable your additional stations.

Uninstalling Desktop Multiplier software from your system should fully restore the original system configuration. See Uninstallation Procedure below for details.

Installing on Linspire

Desktop Multiplier software is currently not compatible with LDM (the default display manager in Linspire Linux). Because Linspire does not provide any display manager packages other than LDM, you will need to install the GDM package from the standard Debian repository before installing Desktop Multiplier software on your Linspire system.

Installing GDM on Linspire:

Step 1: Uncomment the last two lines in the "/etc/apt/sources.list" file to install packages from the standard Debian distribution.

Step 2: Update the package index file.{ apt-get update }

Step 3: Install GDM package.{ apt-get install gdm }

Step 4: Continue with normal installation process as described in the above installation process.

Note: Be sure to create a Guest user before installing Desktop Multiplier as it disables the root login. You can also refer to your OS guide for enabling root login.

The next time the computer boots after installing the software, the Desktop Multiplier system will automatically detect your video cards. After it detects your video cards, you will be promoted to assign monitors for use with Desktop Multiplier's DualView functionality. An on-screen wizard will guide you through the process and generate the required multi-user configuration files, after which the system may reboot for the changes to take effect.

Setting Screen Resolution

The first time Desktop Multiplier starts, a text mode configuration tool enables you to set screen resolutions. If you need to later change the screen resolution, delete the /etc/X11/userful.Mxorg.conf file and restart X. The text mode configuration tool will once again activate, enabling you to set a new screen resolution, and create a new userful.Mxorg.conf file. Desktop Multiplier supports resolutions of 640x480, 800x600, 1024x768 and 1280x1024.

Assigning keyboards and mice

Once the system has started, each workstation display will prompt you to press a function key (F-1 through F-10) on the keyboard in front of the monitor in order to link the correct keyboard to the specific monitor. Both a keyboard and a mouse are required in order to create a station. If the mouse is plugged into the USB keyboard (via an integrated hub in the keyboard) the mouse will be automatically assigned along with the keyboard when you press the correct function key. If you have the mouse plugged into a separate USB port, you will be prompted to press a button on the mouse in order to link it with the correct monitor and keyboard combination.

After setting up mice and keyboards, you may login to your desktop normally.

You may reassign keyboards and mice at any point by simply pressing the Ctrl-Alt-Break key combination or re-connecting the device by unplugging and re-connecting it to the USB port while the system is running. The assignment screen will automatically appear on top of your current desktop. No work will be lost, simply press the correct F-key and return to your desktop.

Note: You can identify unassigned keyboards by examining their LEDs. The LEDs on a unassigned keyboard will blink until the keyboard is assigned to a station.

Warning: Logging in concurrently to more than one station as the same user is not advised and may cause unintended consequences to your system (e.g. corruption of your user settings). Most Linux distributions will warn you if you attempt to login as the same user on more than one station simultaneously such as "this user is already currently logged-in to the system".

Recommended BIOS settings

- Enable all USB ports
- Enable Legacy USB support. (Sometimes called "USB keyboard support"), otherwise only the PS/2 keyboard will work during the Linux boot process.* Disable unnecessary integrated peripherals. Installing extra video cards increases strain on the PCI bus. Disabling any unneeded devices (e.g., serial ports, parallel ports, etc.,) in the BIOS can improve performance and compatibility.
- Disable on-board video (see notes above)

Licensing Desktop Multiplier

To enable the full version of Useful's Desktop Multiplier software, you need to purchase a valid license for the desired number of stations on each computer that you run Useful software. This may be done through an automated registration process by clicking the "Useful" menu choice (typically located under the "Applications – System Tools" menu tree) and following the

instructions, or by contacting your Useful representative who can assist you and optionally send you a license by email. Once you receive your emailed license, you must then manually copy the purchased license file "`##:##:##:##:##:##.lbox.info`" or just "`lbox.info`" into the `/etc/X11` folder on your Linux system and restart the computer.

Note: This license file is typically unique to the MAC address of the specific system it is deployed on and will not work on any other system. For other licensing scenarios and options please contact your authorized Useful reseller or a Useful representative.

Using Desktop Multiplier

Special Key Combinations

Two useful key combinations are available to users:

- **Ctrl-Alt-Backspace**

This key combination resets the current station, returning it to the login screen.

- **Ctrl-Alt-Break**

Pressing this key combination on a keyboard unlinks the keyboard (and any connected mice) from the station to which it was assigned. Once the link is broken, the station to which it was formerly assigned will prompt for the assignment of a keyboard.

Toggle between the regular X and multi-station X

You can toggle between the regular X and multi-station X by updating `/etc/sysconfig/xttype`. Set the "XTYPE" to "MULTI" or "SINGLE" to enable multi-station X, or regular X, respectively. The change will take effect from next reboot.

- **For multi-station X:** XTYPE=MULTI
- **For regular X:** XTYPE=SINGLE

Uninstall Procedure

To uninstall the Desktop Multiplier software, run the UNINSTALL script as "root"

```
sh [[/full path/]]UNINSTALL
```

Optionally, you can uninstall the 1-Box software manually. To manually uninstall Desktop Multiplier, run the following commands as "root".

For RPM based systems:

```
rpm -e lbox-utils-k26
```

```
rpm -e lbox-server-xorg
```

For DEB package based systems:

```
dpkg -r lbox-utils-k26
```

```
dpkg -r lbox-server-xorg
```

After uninstalling Desktop Multiplier, you will need to reboot the computer to return to the previous single-user Linux system configuration.

Known Limitations

(Inherent to simultaneous multi-station systems)

Blank screen saver recommended

Some graphical screen savers can consume 99% of CPU resources. Since 1-Box software is a multi-user system and other users may be working, we highly recommend using only a blank screen or a very simple screen saver.

Audio & USB storage keys

Multi-Station enabled USB devices (e.g., USB sound, USB storage keys, USB CD-drives, USB floppy drives, USB CD & DVD burners, etc.) are currently only supported on Useful's complete desktop solutions (Desktop Server and DiscoverStation). Using the Desktop Multiplier software, permissions and access control for USB devices other than keyboards and mice are handled completely by your underlying Linux distribution.

Independent sound and USB devices at each station requires a higher level of customization to the operating system and related applications than is possible in a generic cross-distribution installer such as Desktop Multiplier. If you require multi-user sound on your system, you may purchase one of our complete desktop solutions (Desktop Server or DiscoverStation). See <http://userful.com/products/> for details. If you are a volume Linux distributor and need multi-user sound enabled on your specific platform, contact your Useful account representative.

Internal device permissions (internal floppy, CD, audio, etc.)

Permissions and access control for internal devices (audio, CDs, floppies, etc.) are handled completely by your underlying Linux distribution. Several examples follow:

- The auto-mounter works differently for different distributions. Typically it will display a dialog on just one screen when you insert a CD.
- Audio: the default Gnome behavior is to give ownership of all audio devices to the first user to login to the system. Subsequent users to login will not have access to any audio devices unless the first user has logged out.

If you require private assignment of internal drives or multi-station audio, you may purchase one

of our complete 1-Box systems or a fully managed Useful solution.

Homogeneous graphics chipsets recommended

While it is possible to support a heterogeneous mix of video chipsets within a single computer box, for example by mixing ATI, NVIDIA and Matrox cards, such a configuration is not recommended as it is not possible for us to directly test and support all possible combinations. Using multiple video cards and monitors that do not share all the same characteristics and X drivers creates additional and unnecessary complexity. Therefore, we recommend keeping your evaluation and production environments as simple as possible and using a single graphics chipset for all video cards within the 1-Box computer.

3D Acceleration not supported on multiple video cards

Using multiple and/or dual-headed video cards in Linux prevents software such as video games from using 3D acceleration properly. This is not a 1-Box specific issue, but a limitation of the Direct Rendering Infrastructure (DRI) within the current X-server system. XFree86 does not support DRI acceleration on multiple video cards. XFree86 extensions not dependent on DRI should work, for example 2D acceleration is supported.

VT switching

Switching between virtual terminals in X (pressing Ctrl-Alt +F) is disabled by default in Useful's 1-Box multi-station system. This limitation prevents a user interfering with users working on other stations.

Reboot and shutdown permissions

Users should typically not have permission to shutdown or reboot a shared computer as this could interrupt other users. The display of "shutdown" and "reboot" options to the user and their functionality are controlled by the specific desktop environment's logout dialog and greeter.

Examples follow:

- Logout dialog: Gnome offers only the "logout" option, however KDE presents reboot and shutdown options. However, in KDE, reboot or shutdown only takes effect after all users have logged out.
- Greeter: Both KDM and GDM offer shutdown and reboot options. With Desktop Multiplier, GDM will ignore the shutdown request, KDM behaves as above (shuts down after everyone has logged out).

ATI RADEON cards with SMP kernel

Certain combinations of Linux distributions and motherboards have known issues with multiple RADEON graphics cards using the 2.6 SMP (Symmetric Multi-Processing) Linux Kernel. If you are using SMP with RADEON chipsets and encounter problems, we recommend switching to a non SMP kernel. This is a bug with the RADEON driver and is not specific to Useful's software.

Boot messages only display on the primary video display

BIOS and Linux boot messages will only display on the primary video adapter. On some dual head cards this is two monitors, but for the most part it will only display on a single monitor. It is important to connect a monitor to this primary head to display these messages. On motherboards with on-board video (video hardware built into the motherboard), typically the BIOS will be set to use the on-board video head by default. We generally recommend that motherboard/main-board/on-board video be disabled in the BIOS for 1-Box systems.

CPU architecture support

This binary distribution only supports the x86 architecture. Contact us if you need support for additional architectures.

Multimedia keys on keyboards are not supported

Utilities that enable multimedia keys in Linux may not be reliable when multiple keyboards are connected to the system.

Additional keyboard map support

The kernel layout map for individual keyboards is ignored by Desktop Multiplier. Hence the X configuration and/or keyboard mappings created by hardware detection and configuration tools such as Kudzu are ignored. At the greeter screen, all keyboards are mapped to the default system language which is usually the language you selected when installing Linux. Most greeters allow login language selection and most desktop sessions (Gnome, KDE, etc) have tools to change keyboard layouts. Using a greeter to change language and keyboard layout selections behaves as expected.

XVidMode extension support

Single-chip dual-head ATI video cards are not compatible with the XVidMode extension. XVidMode extension is disabled on ATI video cards by default when using Desktop Multiplier.

Unstable USB 2 support in Linux Kernel

We recommend disabling USB 2 support (sometimes referred to as “Enhanced USB” or “High Speed USB”) in the BIOS since the current USB 2 Kernel module is unstable under some circumstances. USB 2 devices may be used in Desktop Multiplier, but only at USB 1 speeds.

No output from second head of nVidia cards

Ensure a monitor is connected to each video head before turning on the computer, and optionally that the monitors are turned on. Some nVidia cards will not display to the second head if there is no monitor connected at boot time.

System instability with NVIDIA driver

There is a known issue regarding system instability using NVIDIA video drivers with kernel 2.6.11-rc3 or lower. If you experience random reboot or kernel panics using the NVIDIA driver, please ensure that your kernel version is 2.6.11-rc3 or higher.

Known Issues (to be addressed in future releases)

Both keyboard and mouse are required for station assignment

Currently it is not possible to link just a mouse to a screen. Hence, a keyboard is required even for touch-screen or mouse-only kiosks. Mouse-only assignment will be supported in a future release. Keyboard-only stations are currently possible, as the mouse can be removed after a station has been assigned without unlinking the keyboard.

No support for third-party X configuration file editing tools

Userful's 1-Box software uses a default screen resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels at a standard color depth of 16 bits for all stations. Lower resolutions are automatically used for monitors that do not support this level of resolution. This default configuration may be changed by manually editing the 1-Box X config file (/etc/X11/userful.Mxorg.conf for both X.Org and XFree86 based systems). Only edit config files if you fully understand what you are doing. Userful does not provide support related to user-edited X config files. This config file is automatically re-generated whenever changes are made to the graphics cards, hence if you add or remove graphics cards, you will need to re-apply your customizations.

Note: Some dual-head video cards do not support using different resolutions on each head. It is recommended to use the same resolution and color depth settings for all stations on your 1-Box system.

DVI Support

The default 1-Box multi-station configuration will set all outputs of a video card to VGA. A

DVI->VGA adapter will be required for using DVI ports. Changing the X.Org or XFree86 configuration manually to use DVI output may be possible depending on your hardware, but this is not currently a supported feature.

Monitors on DualView stations must be connected to the same video card

Both monitors that form a DualView station must be connected ports on the same video card. This is a limitation with some chipsets which may be addressed with workarounds in drivers in a future release.

No support for XineramaInfo in nVidia Dual View

XineramaInfo is not supported in the nVidia Dual View configuration. Without this support, X will treat two screens as a single big screen, which will cause some unintended results, such as:

- showing login message on the center of display (half on the left screen and the other half on the right screen)
- maximizing a window over two screens

Virtualization

Some X Server operations have not yet been fully "virtualized". This means not all aspects of X's functionality work the same in a multi-user environment as they would in a single user environment. The X Resize and Rotate extension (RandR) which allows users to change monitor resolutions has been disabled. Display power management system (DPMS) is not currently supported. And the Gnome screen magnifier does not yet work.

Mandrake's display manager: MDKDM does not work

Desktop Multiplier is currently not compatible with MDKDM (the default display manager in Mandrake Linux). The Desktop Multiplier installer will disable MDKDM, and enable another supported Display Manager (e.g. GDM, KDM or XDM).

Linspire's display manager: ldm does not work:

Desktop Multiplier is currently not compatible with ldm (the default display manager in Linspire Linux). The Desktop Multiplier installer will disable ldm, and enable another supported Display Manager (GDM).

Debian-based systems only support keyboards with English-language layouts

Keyboards layouts for other languages are not supported by Desktop Multiplier under Debian at this time.

X stability issues using multiple DualView configuration

If you are using more than two graphics cards and configure them as DualView, X server may crash at the end of the startup procedure. This is caused by incorrect probing of RAM size for the graphic cards. In this case, you will need to specify the correct ram size of your graphic card by adding a “VideoRam” line to the device section of the `/etc/X11/userful.Mxorg.conf` file.

For example, if the ram size of graphic card is 16 Megabytes, add following line into device section in `/etc/X11/userful.Mxog.conf` :

```
VideoRam 16384
```

Technical Support

If you have any questions or problems please contact us:

Voice: (403) 289-2177

Fax: (403) 206-7010

e-mail: support@userful.com

To get help quickly, it is important to be as specific as possible about your problem.

Be sure to include the following information:

- Operating system: (ex: Fedora Core 2)
- Version numbers of lbox-utils-k26 and lbox-server-xorg packages installed
- Video card: The make and model of your VGA video card(s), along with the total number of video ports installed on your system.
- Detailed description of your problem or question
- Computer information: CPU type/speed, motherboard make/model, and installed memory
- Any kernel or X, or X.Org/XFree86 configuration file changes you have made

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