It should come as little surprise that the largest hardware and software providers surrounding the Microsoft ecosystem received the most votes in this year’s annual Third-Party Reader’s Choice Awards. And once again, Dell Inc. won the most awards, this time in 46 categories. Dell’s edge of course comes from the numerous software, security and hardware companies it has acquired in recent years. So who’s nipping at Dell’s heels? The strongest gainers this year were Hewlett-Packard Co. and VMware Inc., while strong showers Cisco Systems Inc. and SolarWinds Inc. also maintained last year’s number of awards. Some strong players in more narrow segments are also coming at Dell—among them Kaseya, ManageEngine, Netwrix Corp., Goverlan, Acronis, Veeam Software, LANDesk, Flexera Software LLC, NetIQ Corp., Barracuda Networks Inc., Kaspersky Lab, Webtrends, IBM Corp., EMC Corp. (including its RSA Security division), NetApp, AppDynamics, Proofpoint and Lenovo Group Ltd.

These awards are decided by readers, not Redmond magazine, and are based on responses to our survey, fielded in late June to early July to our circulation database of 100,000 readers of which 1,056 participated. We include all known vendors in each category except for Microsoft (with a few exceptions) to get a sense of what “third-party” software, hardware and services were most favored for working with and in support of the core Microsoft platforms. The exceptions were in the browser, public cloud and tablet categories, where we wanted to see how Internet Explorer, Microsoft Azure and Surface stacked up these days.

Internet Explorer usage decreased from 26 percent last year to 23 percent this year, dropping it from Gold to Silver (third place), while Google Chrome maintained its 45 percent share, keeping its Platinum award. Taking the place of Internet Explorer this year is Mozilla Firefox with 27 percent, where it seems to have picked up the 3 points lost by Internet Explorer.
Explorer. It’ll be interesting to see if the new Microsoft Edge browser that shipped with Windows 10 helps the company gain ground next year.

Speaking of Windows 10, 22 percent said they’ll upgrade within the first three months, 14 percent within six months and 18 percent in the first year. In all, if respondents act as planned, 63 percent will have upgraded a year from now. Larger enterprises are more likely, however, to stick with conventional wisdom and wait for the first major patches or service pack.

When we asked readers about their PC device preferences, the Microsoft Surface was by far the most popular, though we also asked the same question without Microsoft as a choice, where Dell was the most preferred PC vendor followed by HP and Lenovo.

Using that same methodology, we asked readers their favorite Infrastructure-as-a-Service cloud provider. Microsoft came out on top with 29 percent of the votes for Azure while market leader Amazon Web Services Inc. (AWS) came in second with 23 percent. When the same question was asked without Microsoft as an option, AWS was by far the winner taking 32 percent of the vote and Google came in a distant second with 17 percent.
### Remote Client Management and Troubleshooting Solution
- Goverlan Suite
- LogMeIn Pro
- Symantec Client Management Suite
- Dell Desktop Authority
- Remote Support Center

### Network Automation/Batch Processing Tool
- HP Network Automation Suite
- Goverlan Remote Administration Suite
- N-Able by SolarWinds N-Central
- Kaseya Virtual System Administrator (VSA)

### Scripting Tool
- Goverlan WMIX
- Dell PowerGUI
- VMware VI Toolkit for Windows
- HP Scripting Tools for Windows PowerShell

### Patch Management
- Dell KACE K1000 Management Appliance
- Solar Winds Patch Manager
- LANDesk Software Patch Management
- IBM Tivoli Endpoint Manager for Patch Management

### Application-Conflict Testing Tool
- Dell Desktop Authority
- HP QC Enterprise
- Flexera InstallShield AdminStudio
- Scalable WinInstall

### Security and Compliance

#### Compliance Tool
- Netwrix Auditor
- Dell Change Auditor
- SolarWinds Log & Event Manager (LEM)
- Dell In Trust

#### Group Policy Manager
- Netwrix Auditor
- Dell Active Administrator
- Symantec Control Compliance Suite
- NetIQ Group Policy Administrator

#### Security Auditor
- Netwrix Auditor
- Dell Security Explorer
- Symantec Control Compliance Suite
- McAfee Security Information and Event Management

#### Hardware-Based Firewall
- Cisco ASA 5500 Series
- Dell SonicWall Next Generation Firewall series
- Palo Alto Networks PA Series
- Cisco PIX series

#### Software-Based Firewall
- Symantec Endpoint Protection
- Kapersky Internet Security
- Citrix NetScaler with Application Firewall
- Palo Alto Networks VM series

#### Intrusion Detection System
- Symantec Sygate Enterprise Protection
- Cisco IOS Firewall Intrusion Detection System
- McAfee Network Security Platform
- FireEye CM Series

#### Intrusion Prevention System
- Cisco Next Generation IPS
- CheckPoint Advanced Threat Prevention
- Sophos Unified Threat Management (UTM)
- Barracuda Web Application Firewall

#### Smart Card/Biometric/Two-Factor Authentication
- Dell Defender
- RSA Secure ID
- SafeNet Authentication
- Dell Digital Persona Suite

#### Spam/Content Filters
- Dell SonicWall Email Security
- Barracuda Spam & Virus Firewall
- Kapersky Anti-Virus Protection
- Symantec Mail Security for Exchange

#### Client Anti-Malware
- Symantec Endpoint Protection
- Kapersky Anti-Virus
- McAfee Total Protection
- AVG Anti Virus Business Edition

#### User Activity Monitoring
- GFI WebMonitor
- ObserveIT Enterprise
- SpectorSoft 360
- Proofpoint Enterprise Governance

#### Active Directory Provisioning/Administration
- Dell Spotlight on Active Directory Pack
- Netwrix Auditor

#### Identity Access/SSO Software
- Dell Cloud Access Manager
- RSA Identity and Access Management Suite
- VMware Identity Manager
- IBM Tivoli Identity & Access Manager

### Storage and Business Continuity

#### Backup Software
- Dell AppAssure
- Veeam Ability Suite
- Symantec Backup Exec
- Acronis Backup

#### Storage Management Software
- Veeam Availability Suite
- Dell Foglight for Storage Management
- NetApp OnCommand
- Hewlett Packard Storage Essentials

#### Clustering/Failover
- VMware vSphere Fault Tolerance
- Symantec Cluster Server
- StarWind Failover Cluster for Windows Server
- Symantec Global Cluster Manager

#### ADC/Load Balancers
- Citrix NetScaler
- F5 Big IP
- Barracuda Load Balancer
- Riverbed SteelApp (formerly Stingray)

### Certification and Training

#### Exam Prep Vendor
- CBT Nuggets
- Kaplan IT Learning
- Cisco Press
- Sybex

#### Online, Disk or Instructor-Led Training
- CBT Nuggets
- Global Knowledge
- Pluralsight
- Cisco Press

#### Microsoft Certification-Based Boot Camp
- Global Knowledge
- CBT Planet
- TIE: Certification Camps
- Mountainview Systems
### Virtualization

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<th>Preferred Hypervisor for New Infrastructure</th>
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<th>Virtual Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery</th>
<th>Virtual Management/Optimization</th>
<th>Storage Virtualization and Management</th>
<th>Virtualization Training Vendor</th>
<th>Virtual Server</th>
<th>Virtual Server Add-Ons</th>
<th>Virtual PC</th>
<th>VDI Solution</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Virtual Server</strong></td>
<td>VMware vSphere</td>
<td>VMware ESXi</td>
<td>Citrix XenServer</td>
<td>Red Hat Enterprise Virtualization</td>
<td>VMware vSphere</td>
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### Cloud Services

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<th>Identity and Access Management as a Service Provider</th>
<th>Cloud Management Tool</th>
<th>Cloud Storage Service</th>
<th>E-Mail Hosting Provider</th>
<th>Universal Communications Hosting provider</th>
<th>SaaS-Based Application Provider</th>
<th>PaaS Provider</th>
<th>Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) Provider</th>
<th>SaaS-Based Application Performance Management Provider</th>
<th>SharePoint Cloud/Hosting Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managed Services/Hosting Providers</strong></td>
<td>Rackspace</td>
<td>VMware (TriCipher) MyOneLogin</td>
<td>VMware vCloud Automation Center/ vCloud Director</td>
<td>Amazon Web Services S3</td>
<td>Rackspace</td>
<td>Rackspace</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>AppDynamics</td>
<td>Amazon Web Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity and Access Management as a Service Provider</strong></td>
<td>GoDaddy</td>
<td>McAfee Cloud Identity Manager</td>
<td>Dell Cloud Manager</td>
<td>Dropbox</td>
<td>Hewlett-Packard</td>
<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>Dell Boomi</td>
<td>Amazon Web Services</td>
<td>Dell Boomi</td>
<td>BMC</td>
<td>Amazon Web Services</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cloud Management Tool</strong></td>
<td>CenturyLink</td>
<td>Symantec O3</td>
<td>Citrix CloudPortal Business Manager</td>
<td>Google Cloud Storage</td>
<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>Verizon</td>
<td>Salesforce.com</td>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>Amazon</td>
<td>Dynatrace (formerly Compuware)</td>
<td>SharePoint 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cloud Storage Service</strong></td>
<td>Dimension Data</td>
<td>Okta</td>
<td>TIE:</td>
<td>Citrix ShareFile</td>
<td>Dimension Data</td>
<td>Dimension Data</td>
<td>Oracle</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>Google</td>
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<td>Rackspace</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E-Mail Hosting Provider</strong></td>
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<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>Verizon</td>
<td>Dimension Data</td>
<td>Dimension Data</td>
<td>Rackspace</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Universal Communications Hosting provider</strong></td>
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<td>Verizon</td>
<td>Dimension Data</td>
<td>Rackspace</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PaaS Provider</strong></td>
<td>Google</td>
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<td>Salesforce.com</td>
<td>Oracle</td>
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<td><strong>Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) Provider</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SaaS-Based Application Performance Management Provider</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SharePoint Cloud/Hosting Provider</strong></td>
<td>Amazon Web Services S3</td>
<td>Dropbox</td>
<td>Google Cloud Storage</td>
<td>Citrix ShareFile</td>
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### Hardware

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<tr>
<th><strong>Hardware</strong></th>
<th>Server Manufacturer</th>
<th>Storage Hardware Provider</th>
<th>Thin Client Device</th>
<th>Windows PC Vendor</th>
<th>Windows Tablet Provider</th>
<th>Web Browser</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Server Manufacturer</strong></td>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>Hewlett-Packard</td>
<td>Cisco</td>
<td>Lenovo (including IBM's former x86 business)</td>
<td>Microsoft (Surface line)</td>
<td>Google Chrome</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Storage Hardware Provider</strong></td>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>EMC</td>
<td>Hewlett Packard</td>
<td>NetApp</td>
<td>Microsoft (Surface line)</td>
<td>Google Chrome</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thin Client Device</strong></td>
<td>Dell Wyse</td>
<td>Hewlett Packard Client Virtualization</td>
<td>Google Chromebook</td>
<td>NComputing</td>
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<td><strong>Windows PC Vendor</strong></td>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>Hewlett Packard</td>
<td>Lenovo</td>
<td>Asus</td>
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<td>Google Chrome</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Windows Tablet Provider</strong></td>
<td>Microsoft (Surface line)</td>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>TIE:</td>
<td>HP</td>
<td>Lenovo</td>
<td>Google Chrome</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Web Browser</strong></td>
<td>Google Chrome</td>
<td>Internet Explorer</td>
<td>Mozilla Firefox</td>
<td>Apple Safari</td>
<td>Google Chrome</td>
<td>Internet Explorer</td>
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*(Microsoft included in this category)*