

Vision[®]7

Classroom Management Software

Vision7: enhanced classroom management

In the planning phases for the next major release, the Netop Vision team reviewed the user interface and the way our users, primarily school teachers but also IT Administrators, interact with Vision. We wanted to make Netop Vision easier and more satisfying to work with by improving the user interface and the workflow in Vision. We also wanted to ensure that Netop Vision remains the efficient classroom management solution that it has been for a number of years.

This document describes the new user interface and the ideas and goals that informed the design. The target audience is the Netop Vision user who is familiar with Vision6 or earlier versions. However, new Netop Vision users might benefit from learning about the ideas behind Vision7 as well.

Listening to our users

Making fundamental changes to a solution that has a substantial and satisfied market base is a challenge and right from the outset we knew that we had to investigate what our users needed and ask for their input on what they wanted.

One of ways we collected input was to visit a number of schools where we observed classes using classroom management software and interviewed teachers. We had a lot of valuable input, teaching and usability being a common theme. Teachers seldom receive training in classroom management and quite a large percentage of teachers do not use many of the features available in Vision, likely due to lack of training.

This indicated that we *have to make sure there is little or no learning curve for new Vision7 users.*

We also learnt that classroom management software is seen as a critical element of computer labs and media center environments where it is primarily used for monitoring and managing student computer usage.

This proved that *we have to continue making sure that teachers have easy access to control features* like for example blocking the Internet and allowing only specific applications to run on student computers.

And we learnt that schools really like classroom management, that they are very satisfied with Vision and have few technical issues using the software.

We value our loyal Vision users and we need to ensure that all our teachers continue to be happy and confident in their use of Vision - and we aim to increase the number of enthusiastic users.

A second way we sought input from our users was to create a survey that we sent out in Europe and in the United States. The survey was sent to existing Vision users and focused on features already in Vision: how frequently each feature was used, how easy each feature was to use and any features that were deemed unused or unnecessary. The survey also asked for ideas on new features and general areas of improvement.

The survey responses gave us good data on which features teachers use all the time so we could ensure that these features are easily accessible in the user interface. The data also showed that there are no unused features in Vision so taking features out is not the path to making the product simpler to use.

The third channel to getting input from our user has been establishing a closed forum where specially invited, enthusiastic Vision users have been asked to provide input on our plans and ideas. The forum has been running since the beginning of May 2010 and users have been asked for feedback in the form of short surveys, reviews of design drafts and reviews of internal beta versions. We are very pleased with the engagement and passion shown by the User Advisory Board.

So our decision to listen to our users has informed the design decisions we have made when creating Vision7.

Improve appearance and clarity

Computer labs can have up to 50 computers so having sufficient screen real estate becomes critical to the efficiency with which teachers can supervise and engage students. With Vision7 we wanted to ensure that teachers have maximum use of the screen displaying student computer thumbnails. This meant a critical review of the three Vision6 panes: the Vision pane, the groups pane and the monitor pane and as a result the panes have been removed and the functionality integrated elsewhere in the interface.

Another result of the appearance and clarity focus is the introduction of new icons with clear and consistent basic metaphors and color scheme.

Improve functionality and workflow

The survey responses highlighted the features that teachers loved the most so obviously we wanted to ensure that these should be easy to access, preferable with a single click. This is one of the reasons we chose to implement a simple tab-based user interface in Vision7: the commands that teachers often use are located on one tab, organized into groups of related commands.

The tab-based Ribbon is familiar to most users of Microsoft Office applications like Word, Outlook and Excel and this familiarity contributes to creating a flat learning curve for new users.

To help new users further we included assistance into the interface in the form of extended ScreenTips on all commands.

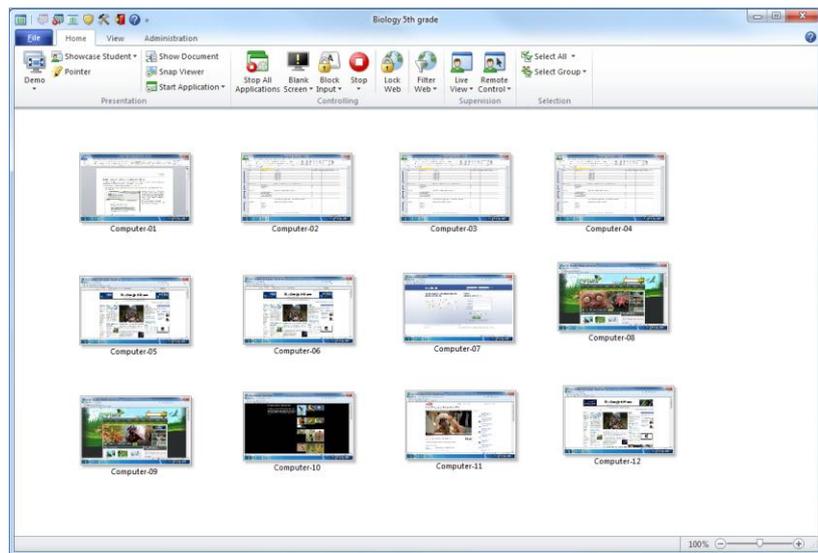
Introducing the Ribbon interface

In Vision7 we have placed all commands on the Ribbon:

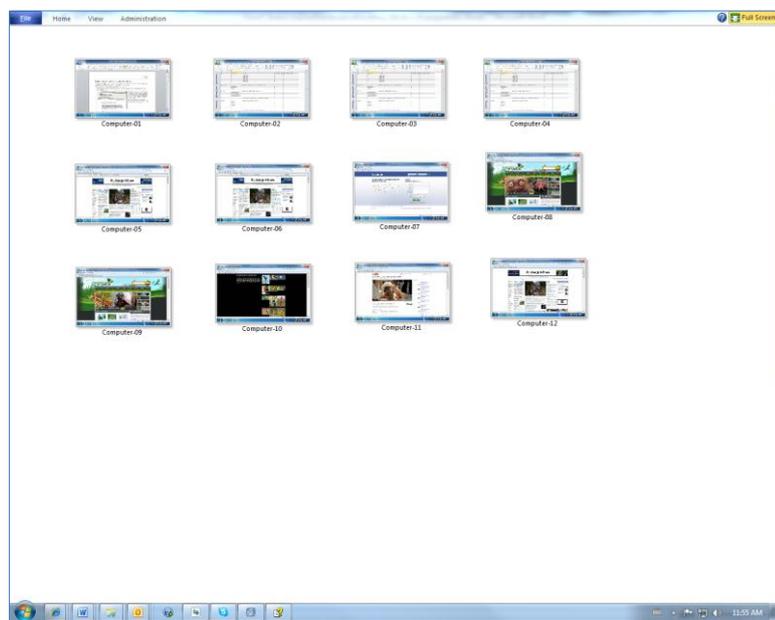


The Ribbon is a region at the top of the screen that presents an easy-to-browse set of commands. The Ribbon is organized into a set of tabs that represent the main functionality groups. The Ribbon provides one-click access to commands with clear, unambiguous labels. To further assist the user all commands have enhanced ScreenTips when the mouse pointer rests on a command.

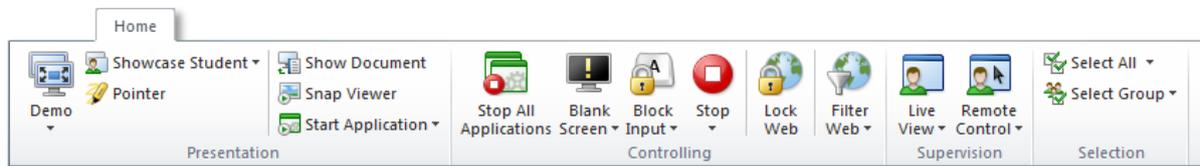
Because the panes have been integrated as commands on the Ribbon, Vision7 provides maximum space for student computer thumbnails:



And if the Ribbon itself takes up too much space, you can switch to full screen and have even more space for student computer thumbnails:



The Home tab



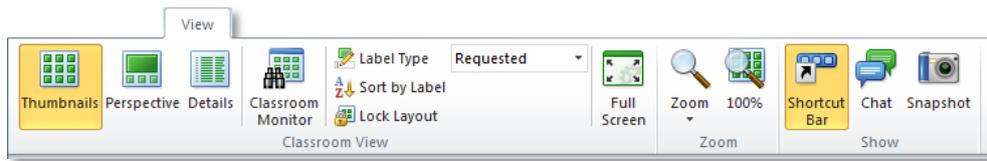
The **Home** tab includes the commands that our surveys indicated are the most frequently used, like full-screen demo, blank screen, lock Internet, remote control and live view.

The commands are placed in functionality groups: presentation, controlling, supervision and selection.

One of the basic ideas is that during a typical lesson, the teacher has all the commands he or she needs available on a single tab.

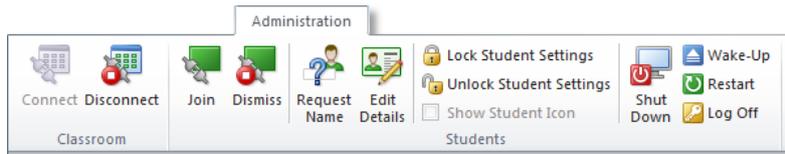
The **Selection** group includes the functionality from the previous Vision6 Groups pane.

The View tab



The **View** tab is all about different ways to view student computers. The shortcut toolbar can also be controlled from the **View** tab.

The Administration tab



The **Administration** tab is where you manage student computers, typically after a lesson has ended and you would like either to shut down computer or to re-start them to allow new students to log on.

