Quote:as it has many config lines that want the server hostname, which wont be the same as the original.
This could be easily overcome by having a "first-start" script which will executing during first start of a freshly-created VPS and do all those final config changes related to hostname etc. (this is usually done with sed or sometimes perl). The last thing what this script should do is to exclude itself from the start.

The only restriction of that approach is you have to set hostname and other involved parameters before the first VPS start. In any case, you have the script to run in a VPS which will set up all this stuff.

The other problem could be to find all those places you need to change -- and more often than not this is not really a problem.

As for the control panels for end users - the good one I've seen is VZPP for VPS owner interface - it's indeed very lightweight and easy even for novice users. Sorry to say this is not for free and currently available only as a part of Virtuozzo.