

HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE ASSET MANAGEMENT IS A DAUNTING TASK FOR IT

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In today's fast paced world, IT pros are busier than ever. With only so many hours in a day, IT pros are often forced to focus on the highest priority tasks, while less important tasks fall by the wayside. One area that is often neglected in SMB and small enterprise environments is that of asset management. Even if such an organization is performing asset management, doing so may involve little more than using a spreadsheet to

track hardware inventories and software licenses.

Admittedly, asset management can feel unimportant in the grand scheme of things. Even worse, asset management might feel like one more task that an IT pro has to cram into an already busy day, while receiving no real benefit in return. In reality however, a good asset management solution can help IT cope with many problems they deal with daily.

One big issue many organizations are dealing with right now is an upgrade to Windows 10. Microsoft says Windows 10 is the last desktop version of Windows to be released for the foreseeable future. Rather than delivering new Windows versions every few years, Microsoft plans to update Windows 10 on an ongoing basis. Windows 10 migration planning is quickly becoming a priority, not just because Windows 10 is Microsoft's

new standard desktop OS, but also because once an organization migrates to Windows 10 they shouldn't have to deal with the cost and hassles of desktop OS upgrades.

Windows 10's hardware requirements are similar to those of Windows 7 and 8, and most of the applications designed for Windows 7 and Windows 8 will run on Windows 10. Even so, an IT pro simply cannot blindly begin a migration to Windows 10 without considering the organization's existing desktop hardware and software. Doing so could lead to unanticipated compatibility issues.

ONE OF THE MOST HELPFUL TOOLS IN GAUGING AN ORGANIZATION'S WINDOWS 10 READINESS IS AN ACCURATE INVENTORY OF DESKTOP HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE.

One of the most helpful tools in gauging an organization's Windows 10 readiness is an accurate inventory of desktop hardware and software. Although many organizations compile inventory information, these inventories are only useful if they contain accurate data. Spreadsheets are commonly used tools for tracking assets, but are quickly outdated and prone to errors.

Having an accurate hardware inventory makes it possible to determine whether desktop PCs meet the Windows 10 hardware requirements. However, while it is important to know how many PCs are ready to run Windows 10, there are pressing questions that generally cannot be answered by a PC inventory. Can a PC not meeting the requirements be upgraded? Will a new PC be required?

A hardware inventory can help answer some questions, but there are other questions that cannot be answered by looking at an inventory sheet. For example, when a new hire needs a PC, IT should be able to use the hardware inventory to determine whether a PC is available, or if a new PC needs to be purchased. What the inventory does not take into account however, is each employee's level of hardware utilization.

Suppose the new employee needs the PC for graphically intensive work. The organization's hardware inventory might confirm that although PCs are available, none of those PCs

meet the graphic requirements. What the inventory would not indicate is if there are any users who have PCs which would meet the new employee's requirements, and are not being used to their full potential. PC resources could be reallocated if enhanced asset management data were available.

Another area that is challenging for IT is license management. In the not too distant past, a software inventory was a viable license management tool. Such an inventory could count the number of installed instances for each application. An administrator could then compare the number of application instances against the number of licenses purchased to verify license compliance.

Today things aren't so simple. Many software vendors no longer sell perpetual software licenses. Instead,

many vendors require licenses to be renewed on a periodic basis. This type of subscription-based licensing dramatically changes the license tracking process.

Software license tracking is no longer just about comparing the number of installed copies of an application against the number of licenses purchased. Instead, an organization must work to determine how many copies of an application are being used. While this new approach might have similarities to the old approach, it is possible for a user to have an application installed on their PC, but never use the application. Application usage tracking is important because it allows IT to better estimate the number of licenses that are needed. If the number of users of an application exceeds the current license count, then additional licenses must be purchased. If however, the organization determines that it has purchased more licenses than are actively being used, then money might be saved on license renewals by purchasing only the number needed. Unfortunately, a traditional software inventory is unable to track application usage.

Another IT asset that IT professionals must manage is printers. Because printers consume resources such as paper and ink, there is a direct, tangible cost associated with every page printed.

A traditional IT inventory system does almost nothing to control printing costs. An inventory system might be able to maintain a record of the printers that are currently deployed and available for use, but such a system does not track printer usage. An inventory system cannot tell the difference between a heavily used printer, and a printer that is hardly used at all. Similarly, a hardware inventory does not typically track consumables such as paper and ink.

Automating Asset Management Saves Money and Headaches

With NetSupport DNA, asset management can have a significant impact on an organization's bottom line. While it's natural to be dubious of such claims, with NetSupport DNA, cost savings can be real and tangible.

It is only possible to effectively leverage inventory data if that data is kept up to date. It is nearly impossible to keep up with managing inventory data manually, and such methods are error prone. NetSupport DNA eliminates the burden of manual data collection and human error, by automatically discovering new devices. When NetSupport DNA discovers a new device, it alerts IT so an agent can be deployed if needed.

NetSupport DNA's hardware inventory tracking does much more than simply track hardware components. It is designed to track hardware related attributes that impact costs.

NetSupport DNA will actively scan your network and identify SNMP-enabled devices, such as routers, switches and printers, further saving time and increasing the visibility of your IT assets.

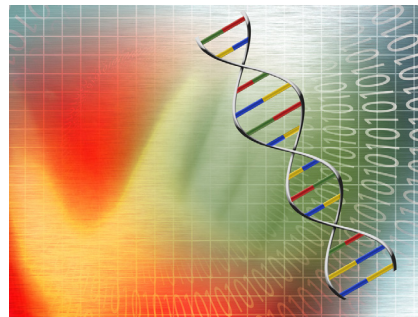
NetSupport DNA's hardware inventory component helps IT gain deeper insight into existing hardware, which helps the IT staff make more informed decisions. Asset tracking data helps IT:

- reduce costs by repurposing existing hardware
- discover whether new PCs are required
- save money by upgrading existing PCs

NetSupport DNA contains a reporting engine that supports the use of custom queries. An administrator can produce a report detailing all PCs running Windows 7, with less than

100 GB of free disk space. Similarly, an administrator might create a report of all of the PCs that do not adhere to Windows 10's minimum system requirements.

NetSupport simplifies this otherwise daunting task of identifying PCs needing upgrades through the use of QR codes. QR codes uniquely identifying each machine can be displayed on screen, or can be applied to a label. The DNS Mobile Console App is able to scan these QR codes and use them to positively identify PCs.



For software license metering, NetSupport DNA makes it easy for IT to find licenses that are either over, or underutilized. Because NetSupport DNA is able to compile license inventories on a departmental basis, it is possible that an organization may be able to save money on licensing by moving an application from a department that is no longer using it, into another department that would otherwise have to purchase a license for the application.

Many software inventory programs simply check the Windows registry and produce a list of installed applications identical to the list displayed through the Windows Control Panel. The problem with using this approach is that it completely ignores Windows Store apps. NetSupport DNA is able to collect inventory information for both

desktop applications and Windows Store apps. In addition, the software can scan the hard disks of managed systems to detect specified file types. This is useful for detecting locally stored data that should have been saved to a network server.

NetSupport DNA can also help reduce costs by eliminating wasteful printing. The rich reporting engine provides deep insight into printing, showing who is printing what. With this information in hand, administrators can curb wasteful printing by directing high volume users to print to less expensive devices, or limiting the printing of excessively large documents.

NetSupport DNA provides deep insight into an organization's IT resources, and doing so yields security benefits. NetSupport DNA includes proactive scanning and alerting to help detect and alert administrators to security issues. NetSupport DNA is also able to require users of network endpoints to accept the organization's Acceptable Use Policy prior to accessing IT resources. Administrators are able to further maintain endpoint security through the monitoring, tracking, and control of removable media such as USB devices and DVDs. Similarly, the software allows for application whitelisting and URL control for Web browsers. NetSupport details these and other security features at: <http://www.netsupportdna.com>.



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