

*i***ITCO**

Success with
Desktop
Management Tools

White Paper

Introduction

Enterprise desktop managers have sought the holy grail of a managed desktop for good reasons. If you can get past the complexity and management challenges, a desktop management suite can give you a centralized set of tools that streamline administrative tasks and reduce the total cost of ownership of desktop systems.

iTCO Engineers have helped many organizations to be effective in delivering a managed desktop. We have compiled the key attributes of successfully managing a project of this nature.

Clearly Identify the Business Need

Enterprise desktop management is an excellent investment for every enterprise organization. With companies willing to invest in these products it's not surprising that vendors and industry media groups are constantly exclaiming the virtues of this direction.

Before you get swept away in the glamour of vendor marketing make sure your project starts from clearly defined business needs. iTCO recommends two ways to identify the needs of your corporation:

- Find the pain. Look at your desktop environment and identify where users, administrators, and your finance department are experiencing pain related to any aspect of your desktop environment.
- Quantum leap. Investigate the attributes of desktop management technology. Which parts of this technology might allow your organization to evolve to a higher level, or make a quantum leap? For instance, your help desk may currently resolve issues by relaying instructions over the phone. These instructions are frustrating and slow for a user to understand. If you substitute the instruction for a remote control solution, then your help desk could take control of a users ' desktop and show a user how to resolve the issue. This dramatically improves problem resolution.

From this list of "issues" or "needs" you can see where desktop management features may help these problems and opportunities. Here are some of the more typical product features you will find:

- Hardware Inventory.
- Software Inventory.
- License Metering.
- Software Distribution.
- Desktop Configuration.
- Management and alerting.
- Remote control.

- O/S distribution.

Not all desktop management suites offer every feature, nor will they all work on every desktop O/S.

Identify what is truly important to your organization before reviewing software packages.

A point worth noting is that it's much harder and more expensive, to implement desktop management across differing desktop devices. If you are a very large company with a 50% split of Unix workstations and Windows desktops, iTCO recommends implementing a tool that will work on both Operating Systems. However if the split is more like 85% Windows based workstations you will get a much better ROI by choosing a windows only tool and leaving the Unix users unmanaged.

This is not a draconian measure. In fact by favoring the mainstream corporate O/S you will attract more users to it. Those that are left on the minority O/S use it because they have to, and (most likely) are smart enough to manage it themselves. Use the 80/20 rule.

Set Expectations Accurately

A project is only deemed a success if management and users feel like it reached their expectations. The trouble is in order to gain funding for a significant project like this there is a temptation to just regurgitate all the marketing hype you have received from your vendor.

Don't be tempted by this. The real benefits are convincing enough.

For instance software distribution is a fantastic feature, but to start off it can be complex creating packages that deploy first time. You don't have to be deploying operating system upgrades within the first six months of deployment. Just think of the increase in desktop security if you could just deploy virus signature files and security patches regularly.

And for some companies just deploying that to their servers is a tremendous step.

Walk before you can Run

When you define the scope of your project you may want to consider that taking small steps in your deployment is a good way to reduce risk, and increase expertise.

Most companies will deploy a product to a pilot group before a general deployment. One way to gain significant experience with a product without a large investment in licenses is to deploy the product to your servers.

Servers are a more stringent controlled environment. Often they benefit from all the features that a desktop does. This can be a good stepping stone before a mass deployment. If you can't be successful on your servers then you will never be successful on the more chaotic desktop environment.

How to choose a Product Vendor

Choose an established desktop management product vendor. There are some very innovative products out there from smaller companies, make sure they are going to remain in the market place.

If your organization is predominantly a Windows Microsoft shop you are going to have to answer the, "Why not Microsoft?", question first before going on to other vendors. Microsoft has a huge advantage here:

- They can integrate the O/S to their desktop management products more than the competition.
- Support for new O/S and applications will be there before the competition.
- You already have an existing relationship with M/S.
- The newest O/S's have some of the desktop management features built-in.
- It is infinitely easier to find administrative personnel trained and certified in Microsoft management products than any of the competitors.

Its hard to find good, impartial, and recent reviews of products in this market space but this one is worth reading:

<http://www.nwfusion.com/research/2001/0409bgtoc.html>

When you do choose a product and a vendor there is only one thing that counts. Did you test it? In your environment? On your desktops? And did it meet the business need you identified?

iTCO Experiences

iTCO Engineers have helped a number of our customers to be successful with choosing and deploying desktop management toolsets. Our experience so far shows that Windows desktops are the overwhelming target for this technology, with most companies choosing the Microsoft products for their integration and existing relationship.

Products from CA and IBM are often chosen in large environments that are Unix centric.

If you would like iTCO the help you keep in the fast lane of the desktop management highway, you will find that project has the following hallmarks:

- We try to keep the project as simple as we can. Simple solutions tend to work better and for longer than complex ones.
- We help you choose a product based on business requirements. Nothing else.
- We set expectations accurately then exceed them when we can.

Simplify IT
iTCO
your eBusiness Partner
www.itcosolutions.com

iTCO Solutions Corporation
P.O. Box 610090
Redwood City, CA 94061
United States

<http://www.itcosolutions.com/>

Enterprise Sales Team Contact
Ryan Edwards
National Accounts Manger
Tel: 650-367-0514
E-Mail: redwards@itcosolutions.com