



PRODUCT EVALUATION GUIDE

Products Evaluated

Insight's Technology Assessment Services (TAS) team has evaluated the following products.

- Altiris® Client Management Suite™
- BigFix Enterprise Suite Patch Management
- Ecora Patch Manager
- Diskeeper Sitekeeper
- LANDesk® Management Suite
- Microsoft® Systems Management Server
- Novell ZENworks®
- Symantec™ LiveState™ Client Management Suite
- PatchLink Update™
- Vector Networks PC-Duo

IT ASSET MANAGEMENT, PART 2: SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT, SOFTWARE DISTRIBUTION AND PATCH MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

OVERVIEW

Systems management, software distribution and patch management products assist in the configuration and deployment of hardware and software assets and upgrades across the enterprise. Managing IT assets can be very time consuming and expensive for any organization and most IT managers wouldn't consider starting a major system deployment or migration without automation tools. These solutions typically include policy and state management, discovery, remote control and healing solutions as part of an entire systems management/ software distribution discipline.

IMPORTANCE

Systems management, software distribution and patch management products offer a number of important benefits:

- Rapidly deploy applications and patches.
- Minimize vulnerabilities.
- Eliminate onsite desktop installation and support.
- Maintain and enforce standard desktop and server configurations.
- Migrate to new operating systems and technologies quickly and easily.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Cost

Most manufacturers price systems management solutions based on the number of desktops or nodes to be managed, so large-scale deployments can get expensive quickly. To ensure adequate budgeting and resources you should enlist the sponsorship of senior management, making sure a thorough understanding of your ITAM strategy exists at high levels of the organization.

Scalability

Select a solution that will scale to meet your enterprise requirements. Many solutions advertise scalability, but if your organization includes tens of thousands of managed nodes, it's best to obtain references from other companies who have had success with equally large implementations of the product you're considering.

Implementation

Implementations will vary depending on the number of nodes, applications, locations and domains, among other things. Be sure you understand the steps involved to implement the solution within your enterprise, and request professional assistance from the vendor or a third party for large, complicated projects. Roll the product out to a small segment of your network first, to get an understanding of it, and then retool your processes before the full implementation.





Hardware requirements

Hardware requirements for systems management solutions vary depending on the number of managed nodes and applications, and how often those applications change. It is important to understand the hardware required to manage a large installation and the data it can generate. Before purchasing a solution, confirm its hardware requirements as well as compatible operating systems.

Client support

Make sure the asset management solution you choose supports all the platforms that reside in your environment. Depending on the solution, Linux® and Mac® requirements may not be supported.

Back-end system requirements

Be sure you understand all the back-end requirements before you select a solution. Most asset management tools require a database for storing collected data.

Device discovery

Some ITAM tools allow you to locate devices only by domain searches. If this doesn't meet your requirements, look for solutions that offer multiple options for device discovery.

Active Directory support

Some products do not currently support Active Directory. If this is a concern for your company, make sure the product you choose supports AD, or plans to in the near future.

Bandwidth awareness

Network bandwidth in relation to systems management, software deployment and patch management solutions can be an issue. Make sure you purchase a bandwidth-aware solution that won't monopolize the network when new products or upgrades are pushed out.

CONCLUSION

Systems management, software distribution and patch management products should be central to your ITAM strategy. Insight's sales engineers can be a valuable resource, helping to match your organization's requirements with the right products.

For more information, contact your account representative, or the Insight Technology Assessment Services team at tas@insight.com

Key features

- Web-based Interface
- OS and application deployment
- Software inventory
- Hardware inventory
- Multicasting
- Policy-based configuration and maintenance management
- Vulnerability and risk assessment
- Personality migration
- Data management
- Wake on LAN
- Software packaging
- State management
- Multiple platform support
- Integration
- License compliance
- Support for remote systems
- Alerts or notification
- Bandwidth throttling
- Mobile device support
- Reporting