

IMPROVING CLIENT MANAGEMENT

Business Management asked **Fred Broussard**, leading research analyst at IDC, to moderate a roundtable looking at the rise of client management suites. Also on the panel: Novell's **Richard Whitehead**, LANDesk's **Steve Workman**, BMC's **Paul Farr** and HP Openview's **Ezi Boteach**.

FB. Client management suites provide visibility into the state of each corporate-owned PC. How can this help improve performance and lower TCO?

EB. Client management leverages automation to both improve IT service performance and reduce costs in multiple ways. First of all, automation enables IT to deliver software to corporate PCs with the right configurations, increasing deployment reliability and therefore minimizing user disruption or downtime. Automation also increases help desk effectiveness. When IT has a clear picture of proper PC configurations, troubleshooting and problem resolution is done more efficiently and quickly. For example, if a key application stops working after a user downloads something from the internet, IT would have insight into this history to quickly pinpoint the root cause of a problem for remediation. Finally, automation gives IT the necessary visibility into application utilization by users to help with software license cost optimization and compliance, as well better prioritization of user-oriented trainings to increase user satisfaction and effectiveness.

RW. The cost of hardware and software are rapidly commoditizing. This is driving massive sprawl of IT assets and driving complexity into the environment. Customers that understand the state of a PC are better equipped to maximize the value of their IT assets and control the costs of managing the PC. Another example of lowering TCO is understanding which PCs can run an application, or whether or not an application is being used. You can then reallocate application licenses to other users rather than purchasing new ones. However, it is also critical to manage the PC based on the person who is using it. By knowing who the person is and their role in the organization, you can deliver the right resources, to the right person, regardless of the PC they are using. After all, it's about making people productive, not machines.

SW. It all starts with client management tools that let you know what you don't know. You need a robust discovery capability for a baseline understanding of asset management and what's in your environment. Obviously

you can't manage what you can't find or see, and you can't secure what you don't manage. Inventory tools tell you not only what software is installed, but how computers are configured and what peripherals are attached to give you a more complete picture of your IT assets. This complete inventory of your hardware and software then forms the foundation for software license monitoring. The ability to understand what licences are being used, what you purchased, what you can claw back, what you can retain – such capability is very significant from a TCO perspective. Client management also extends to application blocking and being able to eliminate unwanted applications from being used, preventing spyware or other malware from attaching itself, and keeping machines clean. Finally, remote-control problem resolution capabilities help keep end-users working and productive, and lower costs through reducing or eliminating the need for desk-side visits from IT.

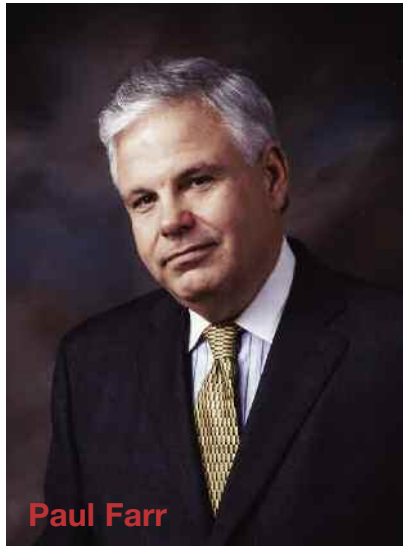
Paul Farr, Senior Director of Solutions Marketing at BMC, has more than 25 years of experience as an executive in the performance management and troubleshooting technology markets.

Steve Workman, VP of Product Marketing at LANDesk, drives the road maps and requirements for all LANDesk solutions. He has more than 13 years' experience in product management and strategic product direction.

Richard Whitehead is Director of Product Marketing responsible for marketing systems and resource management within Novell, where he develops enterprise systems management from the desktop to the data center.

Ezi Boteach is Director of Client Automation Products at HP Software, leading the product and go-to-market strategy for HP's market-leading client management solutions. Boteach has over 10 years of experience in the enterprise software industry.

PF. In today's complex IT environments, informed decisions about license retrievals, vendor negotiations, patch upgrades and standard image normalization need to be made. These decisions that have far reaching effects on the TCO can only be made with the right visibility information. By knowing the current state of machines, changes can be properly targeted and implemented. Armed with software usage information, unused applications that carry expensive licensing costs can be uninstalled. Patch and software compliance can guarantee desktop availability. Human involvement can be reduced to handling exception cases while automation takes care of the bulk of the work. Immediate knowledge of the computing environment can be used to assess security vulnerabilities or to plan for machine upgrade or replacement. Knowledge of what is really being used, and how it is being used, can result in cost savings by buying and deploying only what matches an organization's changing needs. The human effort can be shifted from individual remediation and improvements, to managing policy with automation affecting large numbers of users. Our client management solution supports the ongoing IT vigilance and automation necessary to align with and enable today's businesses.



Paul Farr

“While client virtualization will be made mainstream, we expect to see a co-existence of shared desktops, virtual desktops and dedicated blades”

FB. Does desktop automation differ from the tasks that client management suites have been performing, or do you consider desktop automation different from automating management of client systems?

SW. Our vision is to bring IT customers from a chaotic state to a controlled state, to become proactive and less reactive through an orchestrated process management approach. Without question it's the nature of IT to be reactive at times. There will always be fires to put out from time to time and you need the tools do manage those circumstances. The goal however is to establish more of a common management approach where you can perform policy management and systematic enforcement – essentially providing more automation from a process-centric perspective in driving the approvals, the audit verification, the orchestration of common tasks and repeatable processes, and so on.

EB. Desktop automation and client management are related, but only vary in the level of automation provided. With desktop automation, IT is striving to fully automate tasks that have previously been conducted either manually or with partial automation. For example, with most client management suites in the market today, performing a task such as upgrading a piece of software requires IT to run queries to identify which users have an older version of the software running on their system. To achieve full desktop automation, the management system needs to be intelligent enough to acquire this information on its own. For example, the system needs to be able to identify the users running an older version, understand that a newer version is available and perform the upgrade to all impacted users in a completely hands-off, automated fashion. This is where the value of policy-based automation plays a key role in achieving full desktop automation.

PF. The way we view it, desktop automation is a subset of client management. Desktop Automation Systems refer to desktop supervision for simple tasks whereas client management addresses more variability and associated complexity of mobility at the same time. Our client management solutions move beyond providing assistance for configuration changes by combining full closed-loop workflow to all the different pieces of work that keep an enterprise running smoothly and responding quickly to changes.



This integration into a process that can be managed, audited and reported provides higher visibility and flexibility to enterprises. We build on allowing humans to determine policy and workflow processes and using service automation to perform the actual tedious tasks, auditing and reporting – something for which humans are not often lauded.

RW. Yes, there is a difference between the two. Desktop automation is primarily centered around the delivery of software to a machine versus client management suites (or management suites) that manage the entire lifecycle of a client. This includes the ability to provide deeper asset management, security management, as well as the provisioning and de-provisioning of a device depending on the person using the client. Client management suites also take into consideration other types of end user devices such as handhelds. Many organizations do not fully appreciate the corporate and government security threats that handheld devices pose. As these devices grow in capability, more confidential organization information can be stored on them. If they are lost or stolen, this can put the organization (and the user) in jeopardy. Management suites should allow companies to manage the complete lifecycle of desktops, laptops, and handhelds across a variety of operating systems.

FB. Some of the infrastructure software vendors that are focusing on the data center also have desktop-focused product offerings. How will such offerings address both the data center and the desktop, and what advantage does this offer?

PF. Patches are equal opportunity offenders. More often than not, it is the same patch that can be applied to desktops as well as to servers. Also, computing devices that exist to support organizations (servers, clients or network) elements share management and technical challenges and have marginal differentiating requirements for change. All these devices must be managed together to produce the highest benefit to the organization. BMC recognizes this philosophy and therefore treats all devices as a single solution area to be managed, and allows for coordinated tasks for change, configuration and patch management. Our client management solutions utilize centralization and standardization to achieve economies of scale and ensure efficient and effective process control. Infrastructure software that perpetuates different silo camps within organizations will sub-optimize benefits of automation.

RW. CXOs are beginning to understand that the productivity and profitability of their company is dependent on their IT systems. This means that their users (employees, customers and partners) must have an IT en-

vironment that is flexible, dynamic, and ensures maximum uptime. If the desktop is down, users aren't productive because they can't get to their resources. If the data center is down, or a service from the data center is down, users aren't productive. By providing tools that manage both desktop and data center environments, companies are better equipped to dynamically react to changing user needs. They are able to measure the quality of service, increase ROI, and better align IT resources to meet the business demands – thus turning IT from a cost center into a profit center.

EB. While a single software solution for both the data center and desktop operations teams provides a common infrastructure and increases training effectiveness, most IT organizations have different management requirements for desktops versus data center components. Due to these specific needs, IT prefers to have separate, best of breed automation tools for managing each of these devices instead of a one size fits all solution. With that said, we do see a convergence taking place across these teams, as change deployment, incident management and compliance spans across the desktop and the data center. While automation tools are tailored to the device, there is value in a common management platform which not only orchestrates change across devices but also fosters collaboration across teams. This results in efficiency and faster change execution, improved service quality via faster problem resolution and an auditable process to reduce risk and audit costs.

SW. Many of the challenges that exist in the desktop world also exist in the data center. However, companies have traditionally used custom tools and scripting capabilities in the data center, and have been sluggish to adopt management suite products to help. We totally embrace the IT service management approach – to have the capability to manage from the data center all the way out to the desktop is really the promise of true ITSM. Heterogeneous support is also paramount, because you have Windows servers, Linux servers and Unix capabilities. Those requirements are consistent in the desktop world and will become more important in the data center – having that mixed platform support. This means you understand what's happening in the data center and its impact all the way to the user. There are a lot of different components that make up that IT service – data center server, data center application, net-



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work plumbing and infrastructure, end-user client side applications, the end-user computing device all of those things stitched together make up a service the user depends on.

FB. Client virtualization has been around for many years in the form of thin-clients or blade computing solutions like clearcube; however, this hasn't generated the buzz, interest or market revenue that server virtualization has. Why do you think this is? Do you anticipate this situation changing over the next few years?

RW. Server sprawl. As data centers and server rooms adopted x86 technologies, organizations would simply add new servers to keep up with user demand. This has created an enormous problem in terms of both space and power consumption. With these costs out of control, they are looking for ways that they can consolidate servers while providing the same levels of service. Virtualization can provide that if it is properly managed. The 'buzz' will fade, but the interest and need will not. Organizations that will ultimately be successful with server virtualization will be the ones who also automate and manage server virtualization. Just like physical servers, virtual servers must be managed throughout their lifecycle. They must be patched, updated and secured. Because it is so easy to create a virtual server, you also end up with 'virtual sprawl', which can quickly get out of control unless it is tracked.

SW. Server virtualization enjoys such broad appeal due to its all around utilization, which doesn't necessarily exist on the client-side. With excess CPU capacity on a server, for example, companies can perform virtualization and have multiple operating systems running on it. This maximizes the hardware resource, translating into power and cooling savings. In contrast, a similar buzz really hasn't been there for client virtualization because this computing model has a limited appeal, primarily to vertical markets where security of the data is critical. Client virtualization is appropriate in those settings where there's a very

focused end-user activity and job function to be accomplished. However, there will be new technologies emerging from Intel, for example, that will actually address more of the client security concerns that thin client computing has addressed in the past. Efforts around hard disk encryption and securing the data from a hardware perspective may diminish the value proposition of thin client security.

PF. In the past, client virtualization was battling the 'personal' in personal computers – end-users enjoy having CPU capacity and software on their machines wherever they are. However, with the increasing costs of managing desktops and license procurement, we expect large organizations to be on the leading edge of alternative desktop technology adoption. The success of server virtualization and its cost reductions

will put pressure on organizations to see if those gains can also come in client software virtualization. While client virtualization will be made mainstream, we expect to see a co-existence of shared desktops, virtual desktops and dedicated blades – based on the varying levels of capital cost-efficiency, performance and flexibility.

EB. We see higher adoption rates of these technologies within specific vertical markets with greater technology maturity, such as the financial services industry. The need for complete compliance on the desktop outweighs the cost of adoption in these heavily regulated companies. For the majority of the market, barriers to entry are still fairly high due to the related hardware and software costs, outweighing the drivers for adoption at this point. However, as the need for continuous security and compliance over client devices increases, this will drive more customers to evaluate and adopt these technologies over time. In conjunction with customer adoption, management solutions will likely invest in enhanced functionality in this area and make the transition to a virtual client infrastructure easier and less expensive for customers. ■

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Ezi Boteach