The Digital Transformation of Endpoint Management

Maintain IT control while empowering users, cutting IT waste, and modernizing the workplace

Examine the trajectory of business technology and the strategies that IT must develop to support employee productivity—anywhere, anytime—from their preferred device. To remain efficient, reliable, and secure in a remote landscape, IT needs to focus on simplifying endpoint management tasks to promote a productive workplace.
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Introduction

In 2013, Forbes predicted that PCs would go the way of the dinosaur in *The Death of the PC Has Not Been Exaggerated*. However, the PC remains the go-to device for productivity in the workplace. What does this mean for IT administrators who have limited resources? It might not be necessary to exhaust IT hours and budget on complex solutions such as virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) when physical PCs can get the job done more efficiently. But physical PCs still need to be managed effectively to simplify complexity for IT and maximize productivity for users. To achieve that goal, organizations should pursue an endpoint management strategy that capitalizes on the most modern technologies to support and protect increasingly complex endpoint devices, wherever and however workers use them.
Despite years of innovation in mobile devices and cloud services, workers still rely primarily on PCs for critical productivity tasks. Therefore, it's imperative to the business that IT manage PCs efficiently.

Some experts suggest that VDI is the answer to easily managing evolving endpoints. VDI replaces computers, making deployment and management of endpoints easier by allowing IT administrators to maintain devices in the network from one central server, rather than manually at each endpoint. Even so, few companies have made the leap to reconfigure their networks and replace PCs with thin clients and tablets, and with good reason: such a commitment is a massive capital expenditure (in the millions of dollars for even a midsize enterprise), and accompanied by considerable trade-offs in usability, dependency, and latency.

Today, there is an incredible opportunity for IT teams to drive efficiencies to endpoint management. And with a modern endpoint management solution, IT can reduce spending, simplify management tasks, and achieve many of the benefits promised by VDI while allowing employees to thrive on familiar devices that they already use productively.
Remote work was already gaining popularity when the COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread office closures in March 2020. Many organizations already hosted multiple locations and temporary offices and supported traveling employees who connected over wireless networks from multiple remote locations. Now, a work-from-home lifestyle has become the norm. In addition to virtualizing data centers and system infrastructure, these scenarios complicate the job of IT and raise the priority of endpoint management in overall IT strategy. Keeping users connected and secure in diverse environments is critical to keeping the business running. Outdated PC management strategies no longer suffice and could cost companies more in the long run—both from management complexity and potential lost business.

In addition, businesses with PC refresh cycles or bring your own device (BYOD) models in place are faced with the challenge of supporting even more diverse hardware. Legacy computer management strategies were not designed to efficiently support these highly diverse hardware environments and “work anywhere” corporate culture. Continuing to use old IT management solutions in a modern environment can result in increased IT troubleshooting time, wasted IT resources, and a poor experience for end users, including increased disruptions to their productivity.
SMARTDEPLOY HELPED MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM 33 PERCENT TO 95 PERCENT REMOTE EMPLOYEES AS SMOOTH AS IT COULD POSSIBLY BE.

Chase Ruszas
Atlantic Bay Mortgage
To further complicate endpoint management, PC hardware is more complex. Laptops often include mobile-device-like features, such as GPS, biometric sensors, and multiple cameras. Not only is it necessary for IT to maintain control of the environment, but the environment is constantly evolving. The most discerning organizations will ensure their computer management solution is flexible enough to handle future endpoint enhancements and specifications with ease.

These new challenges, coupled with outdated solutions, leave IT administrators with few endpoint management options that support embracing change, keeping pace with a growing business, and successfully managing an ever-broader scope of IT work. Additionally, endpoint management tools tend to be very complex, forcing businesses to dedicate a specialized administrator to learn and keep up with software features. Furthermore, the solutions lock in the organization to IT administrators and platforms that do not give IT the flexibility needed to support today’s rapidly evolving, remote workplace.

Small to midsize business might be inclined to address these challenges by outsourcing IT, including endpoint management. But outsourcing is costly and does not guarantee endpoints are managed in the most efficient way. Relying on outside sources can also cause increased downtime for end users, because contracted support teams might not respond as quickly as internal support staff.

To achieve best results at the lowest cost, organizations need a solution that allows IT to keep solutions in house, maintains control of the environment, and promotes end user flexibility. This best-of-all-worlds scenario for IT is now attainable. Organizations can efficiently close the gap between remote users and off-site IT without straining resources and exhausting budget.
The Three Core Tenets of PC Management

Three core tenets of modern PC management help maximize employee productivity while simplifying IT. Although they are endpoint focused, these tenets apply to many aspects of IT. The goal is to improve how you manage an evolving category of devices—PCs—that have existed for decades but have grown increasingly diverse and complex without a parallel progression of management tools. Ideal solutions for closing the gap will have three core qualities: they are user centric, they simplify IT management, and they provide efficient delivery.
When you consider PC management, it seems obvious to put users first. But many solutions and processes put devices first and leave users to improvise with personal devices or mobile only for hours or days, compromising productivity and potentially introducing security risks. Hardware aside, what will keep end users productive? Do they work from home or from a central office? Or do they work in multiple environments that require managing the device in different ways depending on the day of the week or the time of the year? Based on this information, what capabilities do your IT teams need to keep your workers productive and the business running smoothly?

The job of IT is difficult enough without adding complexity and hours for remote management. How can critical IT administrators be freed up to focus on strategic projects, instead of remote PC support? Managing endpoints should not require a 20-year veteran to complete ordinary tasks. A modern management solution will allow an IT generalist of almost any skill level to complete tasks easily and reliably—without hundreds of hours of training or ramp-up time.

Many organizations turn to outsourcing because it can seem more efficient to have trained experts solve problems when ordinary tools fall short. But outsourcing is costly and can be unpredictable or unreliable. Other organizations turn to VDI, with the promise of efficiency through centralized management. But VDI often leaves workers with a poor user experience. With the right endpoint management solution, businesses can have both the convenience of centralized, single-image management and the full power of modern PCs—effectively, securely, and affordably.

SmartDeploy endpoint management software integrates with the cloud and supports remote workers without VPN or wired endpoint requirements. By using software delivered this way, organizations achieve the manageability of VDI with the superior user experience of a high performing PC.
Centralized Image Management

SmartDeploy helps you empower IT while delivering on each of the three tenets: User centric, simplified IT, and efficient delivery. SmartDeploy’s unique layered approach delivers the flexibility of single image management for Windows and also for applications. With SmartDeploy, monolithic PC images are logically broken up into separate layers—a driver layer, an operating system layer, application layers, and user data layers—that can all be deployed, upgraded, and managed independently from each other to make endpoint management easier.

SmartDeploy architecture is continually refined, keeping the three tenets a priority. SmartDeploy gives IT the flexibility to meet the needs of end users, lessens the IT load by cutting down on training and deployment time, and offers multiple deployment options for the most efficient delivery in each scenario.

This layered approach helps IT staff put users first and manage each endpoint with maximum compliance and the least downtime. So for example, if a remote user needs a specific application that is not included in the golden image, the application can just be deployed from the cloud to the remote endpoint with minimal disruption and downtime to the end user.

SmartDeploy’s centralized single image management makes it possible for IT to deploy a single image to any computer make or model. SmartDeploy saves IT considerable time by eliminating the need to create and manage a library of multiple images. There isn't a one-size-fits all solution to meet the demands of every environment; SmartDeploy provides many deployment options to efficiently manage endpoints across a spectrum of planned or unplanned support scenarios.
SmartDeploy is a service that lets IT maintain endpoint software and configurations while ensuring a seamless end user experience. Rather than using a server-based toolset that requires IT to learn scripts, set up physical reference machines, and also manage device drivers, SmartDeploy simplifies and automates complicated processes and guides IT through tasks. Furthermore, jobs like Sysprep, which often cause error messages and require hours of troubleshooting, are turnkey. Simplifying these IT processes lets you reallocate your most valuable, experienced IT staff to tackle more strategic IT initiatives.

SmartDeploy is simple to learn and easy to use. Technicians of any skill level can quickly become proficient with nearly every aspect of the solution. Multiple people in IT can be quickly cross-trained to perform any computer imaging need, including Windows migrations, new hardware provisioning, and application deployment. Coverage is immediate for major projects, an IT crisis, or simple vacation coverage for colleagues.

Remote IT automation further simplifies the user experience by executing scripts and tasks on remote PCs instead of requiring user involvement at the command prompt. Cloud-based application installations are silent, so end users don’t have to take any action or be interrupted. IT administrators benefit from the ability to reach users working anywhere, on any device, using any connection.

SmartDeploy takes advantage of single image management and the use of modern file-based imaging instead of legacy sector-based imaging approaches. The imaging strategy facilitates SmartDeploy’s layered architecture. By building separate driver, operating system, and application layers, SmartDeploy enables the creation of a single, hardware-independent, Windows golden image that can be deployed to any OEM make or model.

This Passmark study illustrates how much faster deployment times are when you use SmartDeploy versus competing solutions. Ongoing management is also faster and easier because there is just one image to manage and update, rather than a library of model-specific images.
REIMAGING A LAB OF 56 COMPUTERS TOOK FOUR TO FIVE HOURS WITH MICROSOFT SYSTEM CENTER CONFIGURATION MANAGER. WITH SMARTDEPLOY, IT TOOK ABOUT AN HOUR.

Mitch Mecham
Utah Valley University
Managing a Remote Workforce

Flexible deployment options are imperative as the workforce evolves and more organizations adopt increasingly fluid remote working policies. For IT that means adopting a toolset that can seamlessly support onsite, remote, and off-hours user support.

SmartDeploy offers a variety of deployment methods including media (USB), network based, and cloud. By combining these deployment options with the centralized library, consisting of a Windows image layer, application layer, task layer, and device driver layer, IT can efficiently support end user devices anywhere, anytime. This includes devices that are on or off the network in a local office, branch office, home office, or even a hotel room, and connected through a wired or wireless connection. VPN connectivity is not required.

SmartDeploy is the first and only solution to deliver computer imaging and endpoint management over the cloud. SmartDeploy leverages Box, Dropbox, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, and Microsoft OneDrive for Business accounts as repositories for deployment of Windows images, Application Packs, and Platform Packs. Cloud deployment lets you take advantage of storage you already have in place, but the major benefit is that end users don’t need to be connected to the corporate network for IT to manage their endpoint.

We have our buses set up with routers that let them function as mobile offices. If they have a good connection, we can update drivers and applications and even reimagine a machine over the cloud.

Josh Fabera
Great Lakes Bay Health Center
SMARTDEPLOY’S FLEXIBILITY IS GREAT BECAUSE EACH OF OUR LOCATIONS HAS ITS OWN NEEDS. WE HAVE A WIDE VARIETY OF USERS, TECHNOLOGY, AND HARDWARE, SO IT’S NOT ONE SITUATION FITS ALL.

Josh Fabera
Great Lakes Bay Health Centers
SmartDeploy Empowers IT & Saves Budget

The COVID-19 pandemic has expedited an already emerging shift to remote working policies for many organizations. As both the workforce and business devices modernize, SmartDeploy is doing what few other endpoint management platforms are capable of doing: modernizing endpoint management through end user prioritization, IT simplicity, and maximizing use of latest technologies including the cloud.

Thousands of diverse companies trust SmartDeploy to manage their endpoints. Whether it be deployment flexibility, driver management, or quick answers from the Bellevue-based support team, SmartDeploy saves IT both money and time by making the most complicated processes easy and letting you focus on moving your business ahead.

To Learn More, Click the Links Below:

Online Resources:
- SmartDeploy Comparisons
- SmartDeploy User’s Guide
- SmartDeploy Data Sheet

Reviews:
- G2
- Capterra
- Spiceworks

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