Absolute Manage: Client Management

Intelligent, Automated, Cross-Platform Management of All Your Computers

*"...if you can buy one, and **only** one set of tools for managing your Mac network, Absolute Manage would have to be the choice."*

– MacTech Magazine, January 2008

Managing Macs in a Windows Environment

A Changing Landscape

Computer networks are more diverse than ever. A homogeneous environment of only Windows or Mac devices is a rarity. Multi-platform computing environments are the norm and require a complex IT landscape comprised of multiple applications based on platform, availability, and user preference.

Cross-platform environments are the new standard, supported with the switch by Apple to Intel processors, the Boot Camp capability to run Windows via a Mac, and the ability to run Windows within the Mac OS via Parallels and VMware Fusion.

The result of these technical advances has become every IT team's challenge: How can you deploy and maintain Macs in a large network environment with a PC-centric infrastructure and with servers that provide Windows-based network services?

Actively Managing Mac Clients

The most obvious solution is to forego central management of the Mac devices in your deployment. But this can often become a time-consuming and expensive solution. Consider the following:

- If you cannot monitor and inventory your Mac devices, (including operating systems, software licenses, and hardware components), you will be unable to control costs or budget for future requirements.
- If you cannot remotely install software applications onto your Mac devices, you will have to physically touch each device whenever this type of maintenance is needed, using valuable resources that could be redirected to more productive work.
- If you cannot track the software licenses installed on your Mac devices, you will not know how many licenses you own and how many are already installed. This means your organization could fail a compliance audit and potentially face penalties for unlicensed installations.
- If you cannot actively manage your Mac devices, you will be forced to manually implement constant up-to-date security measures and never know with certainty that the status of each device is current. A single lapse could mean system downtime from un-patched bugs and serious security breaches from malicious attacks on each vulnerable client.

Scalability

The right client management solution must be able to accommodate the unique needs of your business. Some common guidelines:

- Invest in a solution that allows you to start at a point that makes sense for your existing reality. Solutions with high resource requirements for computing environments much larger than your own provide minimal return on your investment with significant ongoing operational costs.
- Beware solutions that don't scale well. For example, if the product you're considering can only support a single server it will be unable to support your organization as it increases in size and complexity. This could lead to degradation in performance and effectiveness of the client management system.
- The ideal solution must be able to support your current environment and your existing IT infrastructure without waste. But it must also scale effectively to support your organization in the future without additional licensing costs.

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Absolute® Manage (formerly LANrev) was built for scalability and expandability. The core functions of the Absolute Manage server (Application & License Management, Security & Change Configuration, Automated Patch Management, Computer Imaging, Asset Inventory, and Power Management) can all be assigned to a single server.

Additional servers can be added as your organization grows. For example, a second server can be added to handle software distribution and license monitoring while the original server focuses on inventory and task execution. With further growth, you can offload the license monitoring to a third server and reserve the second server to focus solely on software distribution.

The distributed staging server architecture available with Absolute Manage can scale with any rate of growth allowing you to promote an unlimited number of agent machines to the staging server(s). Load balancing of the staging servers using Absolute Manage software distribution further increases the efficiency of the deployment ensuring that end users get their applications quickly. The Absolute Manage licensing model allows you to add additional servers and promote existing agents to staging servers without limit and at no additional cost.

History of Mac Management

In the past, supporting multiple platforms meant purchasing disparate client management solutions for each platform and hiring the required staff to manage them. This model had many drawbacks. It was expensive and it didn't scale easily. Not only did an organization have to acquire separate solutions for each platform, which quickly diluted their volume purchasing power, but staff had to be trained and/or hired to maintain each solution. As well, the consolidation of inventory data was only possible via manual entry on a spreadsheet, which introduced a new set of challenges including data accuracy and human error.

Client Management – A Single Solution

Absolute Manage is a single, cross-platform solution that will allow you to manage all of the devices in your deployment regardless of operating system. There are significant advantages to this model, including:

- **Centralized management:** Immediate savings will be realized by streamlining to one solution that – depending on the size of your deployment – can be centrally managed by a single person or team of IT administrators.
- **Efficient training programs:** Reduce the cost and time spent training a large team of employees on diverse solutions. Support staff – regardless of the platforms they support – will use the same software for greater flexibility in staffing and knowledge sharing.
- **Distributed knowledge:** Your IT department will no longer be dependent on a single person for support of a specific platform. In the event of attrition or personnel change, existing staff can assume the vacated responsibilities. As a result, there is no knowledge vacuum or lapse in service even through periods of transition.
- **Streamlined operations & increased efficiencies:** With Absolute Manage there is only one product and user interface to learn. This central model allows support staff to interact with both platforms even though they are managing client machines using their preferred operating system. This will increase end user satisfaction by unifying systems, staff, and clients.

- **Consolidated inventory & tracking:** Multiple solutions often use export modules to merge data from each inventory system – however, this can often result in incomplete data which makes accurate reporting and analysis impossible. Absolute Manage allows you to view data from Macs <u>and</u> PCs within a single console for a complete and unobstructed view of your network.

Active Directory Integration

Few Mac administration programs are able to take advantage of Active Directory (AD) services, even though the Mac clients may be bound to an AD domain. In some instances there is a generic LDAP integration that requires fiddling with search bases and other archaic directory services configuration. Absolute Manage offers full plug-and-play AD integration with zero configuration. Absolute Manage components such as the server, admin console, and agent machines can be easily bound to AD to take advantage of some of the available services including client discovery via AD sites and OUs, AD authentication administrator accounts, and smart computer groups based upon AD OU/group membership.

Defining Cross-Platform?

A client management solution is truly cross-platform when all components of the system including the server, admin console, and client run on both Windows and Mac OS X. This is an important distinction. Be careful of solutions that limit server installation to a single platform, or that require the native admin console run only on Mac OS X or Windows. If the technology is truly cross-platform, these components should be able to run on either platform.

Absolute Manage has no such restriction and allows IT departments to install these components on either platform. This means that Absolute Manage can leverage existing infrastructure with little or no hardware investment. For example, with Absolute Manage a staging server can host both Windows and Mac packages for software distribution regardless of its native operating system.

Absolute Manage provides the following basic client management functionality for both Windows and Mac OS:

- Application & license management
- Security, change & configuration management
- Automated patch management
- Asset inventory
- Power management

Benefits of Absolute Manage

Along with the basic client management capabilities noted above, our customers enjoy many other benefits unique to our technology:

- **Manage client machines over the Internet** – Issue commands to Windows and Mac clients as if they were on your local network, even behind firewalls and NAT routers.
- **ImageLive disk imaging** – Boot into a Mac client and remotely re-image a startup volume. Use this to migrate from Mac OS X 10.4 to 10.5.
- **Software purchase tracking** – Track software purchases for licensing specifications including purchasing, vendor, and maintenance information.

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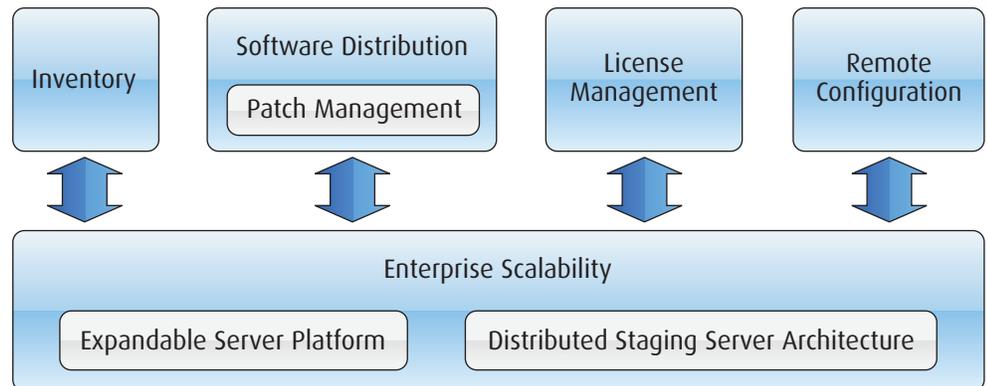
- **Custom info items** – On clients that don't already have a built-in information item, attach an AppleScript/Visual Basic script, shell script/BAT file, executable, or plist/registry setting to automatically inventory virtually anything.
- **Distributed Wake on LAN** – Wake up an agent machine across subnets (at least one agent on the subnet must be powered on and active).
- **Time Machine integration** – Remotely start/stop a backup and turn automatic backups on or off. Remotely roll back a Mac to a backup set without having to boot from the Leopard installation DVD.
- **View Text File command** – View Apple system log files, NT event logs, or any other text file in real time with file changes updated in the Absolute Manage viewer.
- **InstallEase software re-packager** – Snapshot a software installation and output it in PKG, DMG, or Iceberg format. Feed an existing PKG installer to InstallEase and a PKG uninstaller will be automatically generated.
- **Role-based administration** – Restrict access to agent machines by admin account including the available commands upon which they can execute.
- **Unique information items** – This includes laptop battery information, Apple machine production, registration, and warranty information.

Conclusion

The most cost-effective way to manage Windows and Mac clients is with a fully cross-platform client management solution, one that provides components that are equally effective on either platform. With Absolute Manage you can significantly reduce the overall cost of managing Windows and Mac client computers in a shared environment. You will realize immediate savings including lower cost of software, efficiencies in staffing, consolidation of Windows and Mac inventory data, and a complete plug-and-play AD integration. Absolute Manage provides authentic cross-platform functionality, maximizing infrastructure and functionality for supremely satisfied Macintosh and Windows end-users and a streamlined, efficient support staff.

About Absolute Software

Absolute Software Corporation is the leader in Computer Theft Recovery, Data Protection and Secure Asset Tracking® solutions. Absolute Software provides organizations and consumers with solutions in the areas of regulatory compliance, data protection and theft recovery. The Company's Computrace® software is embedded in the firmware of computers by global leaders, including Dell, Fujitsu, MPC,

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General Dynamics Itronix HP, Lenovo, Motion, Panasonic and Toshiba, and the Company has reselling partnerships with these OEMs and others, including Apple. For more information about Absolute Software and Computrace, visit www.absolute.com or blog.absolute.com

Enterprise Desktop Alliance

Absolute Software is proud to be a member of the Enterprise Desktop Alliance (EDA). The EDA is a group of companies that deliver solutions that streamline the deployment, integration and management of Mac and Windows devices within an existing Windows infrastructure. Visit www.enterprisedesktopalliance.com to learn more.

For more information on Compliance, Protection and Recovery, and to learn how your organization can deliver a layered approach to corporate security, please contact:

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