"Manage me in less time."

Hudsonville Public Schools: Managing More Computers in Less Time

Hudsonville Public Schools, located in western Michigan, is a K-12 school district with 5,300 students. The district's 1,300 computers, consisting primarily of Macs, plus about 100 Windows-based systems, are scattered throughout eleven schools, four support and administrative buildings. A central staff of just six people manages all of the computers, along with their installed programs.

Cross-Platform Software Distribution and Installation Made Easy

For Network Manager Jonathan Sherman, distributing and installing new software and updates on all of these computers with multiple OS's, was a big challenge. Although he had tried other solutions, none were enabling him to accomplish this task in a timely manner. Even with on-site help from four, secondary school-based Technology Specialists, a remote management solution was needed. After all, as Sherman put it, with patches averaging two per week, "sitting down in front of all 1,300 computers isn't an option."

The district uses Apple's Remote Desktop software, but, while it is effective in some areas, it just couldn't scale to a thousand plus computer network, or install software efficiently let alone on PC's. Computers left powered down, or asleep, would be missed; connections through multiple sub-nets were problematic; and even staging the software for deployment was impractical. Even with an automated tool, Sherman said, deploying software was "always a struggle."

Absolute® Manage (formerly LANrev), though, made life easier in Hudsonville almost immediately, helping the team with each of the logistical hurdles that face every network support team tasked with software distribution. For example:

- **Absolute Manage discovers and installs on every computer.**
  It is no longer necessary to warn users throughout the district to leave computers on when new software is scheduled for installation. Efficiently scanning the network, Absolute Manage's Wakeon-LAN functionality can wake up sleeping computers, while the install routine is also smart enough to wait for computers that are powered down, to come back online. Even if computers crash during software installation, Absolute Manage will attempt to install again, and report any errors.

- **Absolute Manage's user-friendly reports track the progress of the software deployment.**
  Detailed reports save valuable staff time by highlighting any issues that might require additional attention.

- **Absolute Manage helps balance network and server loads during network-wide deployments.**
  By using its unique throttling capability and allowing multiple staging servers for the software packages, Absolute Manage helps keep network traffic distributed, and speeds deployments that might otherwise be slowed.

Tracking Software License Compliance

Almost weekly, it seems, there is another story about a corporation or school district facing penalties for use of unlicensed software. With IT budgets remaining tight, this kind of unplanned expense can be disastrous, delaying or even canceling other worthy projects. But in the day-today rush of maintaining, updating and supporting hundreds, or even thousands of computers, it is all too easy to lose track of license counts.

In Hudsonville, Absolute Manage now enables one person to track compliance on all computers. Simply entering records of authorized licenses from existing files, and from each new purchase as it is made, enables Absolute Manage to compare installed software to licensed software, and highlight non-compliance so that staff can take corrective action. The best news is that this corrective action does not necessarily mean spending money on more licenses.

For example, although a scan of licenses may show too many copies of a particular graphic design program installed, it may be that the offending copies are actually installed in offices where they are not needed; a result, perhaps of computers being moved between departments. Since Absolute Manage can also report use of the software, it's easy to see which copies are not being used, and simply uninstall those copies to get within license compliance.

In the same way, the staff at Hudsonville is finding that they can avoid new software purchases by identifying and removing unused applications, and installing them where they are actually needed.

The Bottom Line

No single tool can perform every function. In Hudsonville, ARD is still used for remote control, but for remote management, configuration and software distribution, Jonathan Sherman and the staff at Hudsonville schools know that there is only one answer: Absolute Manage.

About Absolute Software

Absolute® Software is the leader in computer theft recovery, data protection and secure IT asset management. Absolute provides organizations with the ability to accurately and securely track their computing assets, manage leased computers, ensure software license and regulatory compliance, deter computer loss, protect data and recover stolen computers. For more information about Absolute Software and its Computrace suite, visit: www.absolute.com