

**Reduce IT System Management Costs
in a Mid-Size Business**

@ 2008, Gwen Zerfat

The complex requirements of today's IT requirements can have a negative impact on the successful business, increasing risk and resulting in spiraling costs. How can the IT administrator streamline monitoring and management while reducing costs?

Fortunately, next-generation system management solutions are promising to improve administrator productivity and significantly reduce costs. This whitepaper will examine common mid-size business IT challenges and introduce the advantages of a unified system management solution.

Drivers Influencing the Mid-size Business

IT organizations become increasingly complex over time. What was once a few client machines and a server is now too many systems for one person to manage effectively. Downtime of the network or an individual system typically causes significant losses to productivity, not just to an individual, but also to the entire company. Everyone in the organization has a computer, though of different ages and hardware configurations. There is connectivity to the internet via various SNMP devices accessed by both fixed and wireless connections. File servers, print servers, a database server, and an email server all require managing. Additionally, a custom application running on a Unix-based operating system is core to the business. Ensuring that all systems have the latest anti-virus signatures and updates is an ongoing challenge. Troubleshooting problems are time consuming

because there are so many potential issues. As more employees join the company, overhead increases. Budgets are tight not just for hiring additional staff but for training needs as well.



In today's world, functioning software, servers, and workstations have become mission critical for any successful business. Maintaining equipment and anticipating problems in a timely manner is an increasingly complex proposition. System administrators must navigate a maze of systems to find relevant information. Utilizing many applications with different interfaces requires training and slows the overall success of managing an organization.

Critical IT Management Challenges

Poor System Management Control, reduced administrator productivity, and skyrocketing costs are the three major challenges faced by most data centers.

Poor System Management Control

The limited ability of administrators to address all the IT needs of an organization creates a bottleneck to success. Administrators must access data across multiple systems and then proactively manage the IT organization. Juggling various objectives and tasks has a major impact on ability of an administrator to meet service level agreements. With information residing in many different locations, such as client systems, email servers, order management systems, the administrator must know where to look and how to use each system. This focuses administrator attention on individual systems rather than the organization as a whole.

Reduced Administrator Productivity

The typical tools available to the administrator usually limit efficiency. When administrators must work with many different applications, hardware, and operating systems, the outcome is high average handle times. When many different systems with different interfaces exist, administrators must be trained to use them. The high turnover rate in some IT departments complicates administrator productivity because of the time it takes to train new administrators. When an administrator does not know how to use a system, he or she must ask for help, increasing the average time to resolve a problem.



Often, an administrator's desktop includes numerous screens running many different applications. Logging in and managing all the systems necessary for customer inquiries can be daunting.

Completion rates are dismally low in data centers that suffer from these productivity challenges. With the high cost of down time, IT managers must do something to ensure issues are resolved rapidly.

Spiraling Costs

The IT department has become an enormous cost center for most companies. With the training necessary to operate a dozen or more applications, administrators have a costly ramp-up time. It is common to train each administrator for multiple weeks.

With the enormous turnover rate among IT departments—some as high as 50 percent each year—organizations need a solution that minimizes training and improves the effectiveness of the administrator.

The Solution: System Management With Centralized Administration

Designed to increase administrator productivity, lower IT costs and dramatically improve service levels, next-generation system management solutions represent the future for all IT organizations. Next-generation solutions are comprised of services that link existing systems into a single, unified solution. Now, multiple SNMP devices, applications, and operating systems can be easily managed bringing rapid improvements to the IT organization.

With next-generation system management solutions, legacy systems, modern enterprise applications, and custom systems can be brought together in a flexible and easy-to-use centralized system. An administrator can seamlessly manage the entire network from a common application.

Aggregated data is viewable from a single interface. Gone is the need to access multiple systems or spend weeks training administrators to operate many



applications. Now an administrator can quickly and easily access all data in one familiar interface.

Consider the following example: The CEO calls to report that she is not receiving e-mail. From a central unified console, the administrator can check the SNMP device to see that there is network connectivity, monitor the health of the e-mail server to see that message queues are flowing and there is sufficient disk space, and determine that the CEO's computer is in fact connected to the network and running the latest software patches and updates. The administrator has a complete picture of the network and can quickly identify the root cause. Administrators can better understand the issues and immediately address the problem system.

Next-generation system management solutions provide significant enhancements over previously available tools:

- Consolidation of information into a single, easy-to-use system
- Fragmented view of information aggregated into a single unified view
- Reporting as a part of the management process
- Customization through the use of management packs

The Benefits of comprehensive system management tools

An IT system management solution provides numerous improvements, administrator productivity and cost-savings benefits, as follows:

- Provides all relevant information in a unified user interface, regardless of the data source
- Moves administrator focus away from reacting to problems and towards proactively managing systems
- Provides simultaneous access to all relevant data
- Empowers the administrators to effortlessly add service capabilities to improve service



- Lowers the need to train administrators on multiple applications by providing a single unified desktop
- Optimizes the workforce, allowing the same staff to meet growing business demands

What to Look for in a System Management Solution

Here are some issues and functionality you should consider when selecting a system management solution for your organization:

Keep your network up and running

Your system management tool should be able to help you manage all aspects of your IT organization. Regardless of the applications, hardware and operating systems you are using, there needs to be an adaptable environment to accommodate your business needs. You need multiple views of the application data in your network, in order to track database growth, connectivity to e-mail servers or monitor the status of all the SNMP devices in your network. Alerting functionality should notify issues as soon as there is a problem or a service goes down. Your solution needs the flexibility to report your findings in a manner appropriate to your needs whether as a chart, table or report.

Troubleshoot problems

Accidents happen, systems go down. Management Packs are optimized so you only focus on those alerts that matter to your organization.

Patch Management

Your management tools should be work with key industry vendors who have integrated their updates providing a single point of control. You should be able to choose to automatically deploy critical updates or have them be subject for approval, and track compliance across your network.

Application Deployment

Deploying and uninstalling applications to a target set of computers should be standard functionality in your ideal management tool. There should be no need to worrying about having to deal with packaging or other complex processes.



Hardware and Software Assets Management

Client machines are each employee's connection to the network. Your tool should easily gather hardware attributes and a complete inventory of the applications running on each machine. A summary inventory should be made available for quick troubleshooting.

Unified experience

Multiple features should still only require a single console for your core management needs. That means a single product to purchase, deploy and learn. Server, Desktop and Network monitoring, software and update management and asset inventory should be available under a single, easy to use, unified experience.

IT Environment Visibility

Gain better insight into how your IT environment is performing by creating health reports. A quick status of your IT environment and any action items required will help you anticipate potential issues before they arise.

Rapid deployment:

Seek a product that is able to achieve proof of concept in weeks and complete the rollout in fewer than 6 months.

Affordable cost

The ideal solution should deliver a return on investment within 6 to 12 months.

The Microsoft System Center Essentials 2007 Advantage

Microsoft System Center Essentials 2007 is a flexible, next-generation system management solution that utilizes SOA to transform and expand data center operations. With Essentials 2007, data centers can better address customer needs, dramatically improve administrator productivity, and cut the costs associated with traditional data centers.



Keep your applications and your network up and running

Essentials 2007 provides multiple views of the application data in your network. Track database growth in SQL Server™ databases or connectivity to Exchange servers. Essentials 2007 tracks the status of all the SNMP 2.0 devices in your network, allowing you to receive alerts when something important goes down.

Troubleshoot problems more quickly

Essentials 2007 provides a rich knowledge base out of the box to help you diagnose and fix critical alerts for key products like Exchange Server and SQL Server™. These management packs are optimized so you only focus on those alerts that matter. Not only do you get in-depth explanations of problems, but more importantly, Essentials 2007 often provides simple in-line tasks to click and “fix it now.” Additional management packs are available from Microsoft and 3rd party providers for both Windows and non-windows environments.

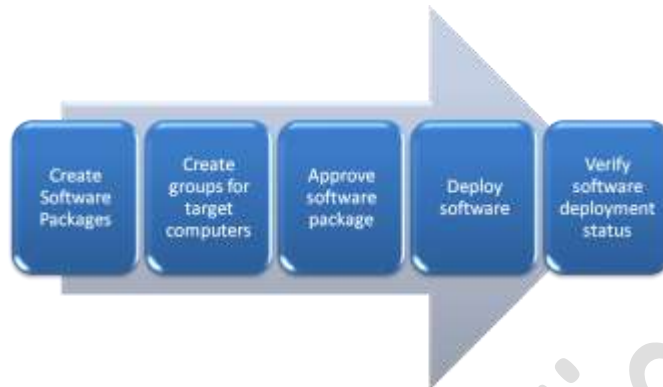
Simplifies Patch Management

Essentials 2007 provides integrated patch management for Microsoft products in the Microsoft Update catalog. Additionally we’ve worked with key industry vendors to integrate their updates into Essentials 2007 providing a single point of control for patch Management. You can choose to automatically deploy critical updates or have them be subject for approval, and track compliance across your network. Want the patch deployed now? No problem, just click a button to initiate deployment real time.



Deploy Applications easily

Deploying applications has never been so easy.



Using a simple wizard you can deploy applications to a target set of computers without worrying about having to deal with packaging or other complex processes. Ready for Office 2007? Essentials 2007 can help you deploy Office 2007 with your custom settings in a snap. Additionally Essentials 2007 uses Background Intelligent Transfer Service 2.0 (BITS) to optimize traffic over your network. Changed your mind? Don't worry, it's even easier to un-install a previously deployed application.

Track hardware and software assets automatically

No more spreadsheets to maintain - Essentials 2007 gathers more than 60 hardware attributes and a complete inventory of the applications running on each machine. A summary inventory is available for quick troubleshooting or in the detailed report by machine groups.

Unify your IT management experience

Essentials 2007 provides a single console for your core management needs. That means a single product to purchase, deploy and learn. Server, Desktop and Network monitoring, software and update management and asset inventory under a single, easy to use, unified experience.

Improve Up-time

Reduce the time you spend dealing with end-user issues with features like Agentless Exception Monitoring (AEM) which allows you to collect application and OS errors that would otherwise remain anonymous. Use built in tasks to



remotely execute important tasks on user's computers, from performing a simple *ipconfig* to a remote desktop session, all without leaving the management console.

Gain visibility into your IT environment

Start your day with a Daily Health Report, providing a quick status of your IT environment and any action items required. For more detail, go to the Essentials 2007 console and consult the more than 180 reports out of the box that help you gain better insight into how your IT environment is performing.

Leveraging Microsoft's .NET framework, System Center Operations Manager and SQL Server technologies, Essentials 2007 is able to deliver service to your business. Microsoft Essentials 2007 customers have been able to reduce their average call handling times by up to 25 percent and reduce training by up to 40 percent. Many Microsoft Essentials 2007 customers begin to see financial gain in only 6-8 weeks after proof of concept.

Get an affordable comprehensive IT System Management Solution Designed for Your Organization

Essentials 2007 is priced for the budgets of midsize businesses, allowing you to purchase only what you need and then grow as your business requires it, with flexible licenses for up to 30 servers and 500 clients at a fraction of what typical management solutions cost.

Take your data center to the next level with Microsoft System Center Essentials 2007. For more information go to <http://www.microsoft.com/sce>.

