Getting More from SCCM with Asset Vision:
Top Five Reasons Why Companies Augment SCCM with Asset Vision® Optimize

A SCALABLE SOFTWARE WHITEPAPER

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Executive Summary

SCCM is one of the most widely deployed configuration management products in use today, but SCCM can be augmented to great benefit. In this whitepaper, you will learn the primary reasons why companies augment SCCM with Scalable's Asset Vision Optimize. By definition, this paper outlines many capabilites not present in SCCM, but it should not be seen as positioning Asset Vision to replace SCCM. Asset Vision cannot replace SCCM, since SCCM has many capabilities not present in Asset Vision. Rather, for organizations evaluating Asset Vision, this document illustrates those areas where Asset Vision can add considerable value to their SCCM implementation.

Reason 1: The need for automated, real application usage across Windows desktops and servers

SCCM requires discrete application rule identification in order to track what applications should be "metered" ahead of time. However, the old saying "you don't know what you don't know" makes this SCCM requirement almost self-defeating, as it creates an issue with application usage tracking. Applications that are not pre-defined will never be shown as having been used, even if they are used heavily. This fact is particularly relevant for applications that run in a virtualized environment that leave no trace on the workstation. **In short, SCCM will always under-report the list of applications being used in any organization, making it impossible to rely on its information for migration planning.**

Unlike SCCM, Asset Vision automatically tracks real application usage dynamically with zero configuration. This dynamic usage tracking occurs independent of where the application is launched from, and is tracked at a user and machine level.

Further, SCCM usage monitoring only identifies the amount of time the application is run on the workstation, in contrast to Asset Vision, which measures the amount of time a user is interacting with any launched application. **No information is provided by SCCM as to the amount of time a user genuinely interacts with the application.**

A common usage profile for applications is: they are launched; used once, remain open (possibly for hours) on the desktop, and are then closed at the end of the day. SCCM usage monitoring would show this as a heavily used application, whereas Asset Vision would correctly report it as very lightly used. In consequence, for applications SCCM does identify as being used, SCCM will always over-report the extent to which those applications are used.

The impact of this SCCM usage reporting gap: any application migration or licensing planning exercise based on SCCM usage information will always result in the migration or licensing of applications that either aren't required, or for which a more efficient implementation is possible.

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An always-on, configuration-free mechanism for metering genuine application usage is the only way to get a reliable data set upon which to base a variety of decisions. The alternative is spiral of second guessing the results and continually iterative configuration. Asset Vision will accurately report real usage of known and unknown applications with zero setup.

Reason 2: Full support for the metering of applications regardless of implementation

Another key reason why people use Asset Vision to augment SCCM: this augmentation enables the metering of applications whether traditional, web, SaaS, or virtual, capturing the full picture of application usage in a single place rather than forcing the user to aggregate less accurate information from a variety of disparate sources.

Asset Vision gathers the same information for applications that work through web browsers, run on Citrix XenApp or Terminal Services, or are streamed down via an App-V or ThinApp virtualized application environment, as it does for traditionally installed applications. For web applications, Asset Vision can identify the precise URL being used and associate it with a friendly name by means of pre-defined URL patterns. In all cases the usage context gathered is the same. Asset Vision will identify the user of the application and the endpoint device from which the application is consumed.

In the case of XenApp or Terminal Services, this capability is achieved by means of a version of the Asset Vision agent that runs on the XenApp or Terminal Services server. For XenApp or Terminal Services applications, additional concurrent use analysis is possible. These reports raise awareness of any potential capacity or licensing issues as a result of higher levels of concurrent use.

For companies using SCCM without Asset Vision, getting this complete and accurate a picture of usage would take an order of magnitude more time, and the resulting information would still be inaccurate and incomplete for the reasons noted earlier.

Reason 3: Identification of read-only use of applications

The ability to distinguish between usage that is read-only in nature and full read/write activity is entirely absent within SCCM. Asset Vision can fill this gap.

For expensive and complex applications the ratio of read-only usage to total usage can be very high. When considering licensing costs or migration issues, understanding which users fall into which categories can dramatically reduce ongoing expenses. Often solutions for read-only usage requirements are more cost-effective, give greater end-user satisfaction, and are easier to migrate and maintain. Further, any progressive organization will want to identify its constituency of read-only users for each of its main applications to improve the service it provides its end-users. All this can be enabled by augmenting SCCM with Asset Vision.

Reason 4: Automated matching of run-time components to installed packages

Asset Vision further augments SCCM through its unique capability to dynamically identify which installed package a particular run-time component is part of. This unique capability makes it possible to unequivocally identify a run-time component as an artifact of a particular package installation.

This matching does not require any form of catalog; it is achieved using an algorithm Scalable invented. This algorithm enables a very clear relationship to be made between the running processes on the workstation and installed software packages. It will work on packages installed using both MSI and non-MSI methods.

Reason 5: Application data object and dialog usage

Asset Vision features a usage capability that captures detailed usage at a read/write level on data objects and dialogs, providing a powerful extension of SCCM capabilities. A data object in this context could be a Word or Excel document, a project file, a development project, or anything identified in the caption zone on an individual window. With Asset Vision, it is possible to see the extent to which any particular object is used by a defined group of users.

"[Asset Vision] lowered ongoing maintenance and support costs and improved the performance of the environment."

The benefits of this feature are considerable for a data rationalization or migration project. Case in point: in one organization, Asset Vision identified a large group of individuals that were regularly sharing the same Microsoft Access database. Early identification by Asset Vision enabled the organization to rapidly migrate the data onto a SQL Express platform. This lowered ongoing maintenance and support costs and improved the performance of the environment, profoundly and positively affecting the service delivered to that group of end users.

The dialog usage metering capability of Asset Vision enables tracking of those application sub-functions that do not exist independently of the main application but have a discrete licensing, maintenance or migration impact. Common uses for this feature include the ability to determine whether a group of users requires all licensed market data feeds, or whether certain communities of users require training on newly deployed or existing application sub-functions.

The ability to identify the object or dialog being referenced within an application presents meaningful opportunities for cost reduction and efficiency improvements. These opportunities are particularly relevant for high-value applications with granular licensing models, and in situations where expensive plug-ins are widely deployed.

Additional features relevant to the discussion

SCCM Native Integration

Asset Vision integrates directly with SCCM through a natively supported integration interface. This integration piece completes the workflow between removal/redeployment of underutilized applications and SCCM's package management capability. Ultimately, SCCM administrators can save days by using Asset Vision as the intelligence tool to drive SCCM software management policies.

Intelligent Software Application Catalog

Through a variety of mechanisms, including heuristic processes and crowd-sourcing, we are able to keep the catalog of over 100,000 titles current. The impact of this to an organization is an unrivalled ability to identify and categorize almost any inventoried software package generally available.

Plug-In Detection

Asset Vision can identify plug-ins installed alongside main applications. The existence of plug-ins can impact migration and licensing.

License Key and ISO 19770-2 Tag Retrieval

Asset Vision is able to retrieve license keys from remote workstations for all Microsoft and Adobe products. These keys can be stored and/or used for subsequent installations. Scalable adds support for additional vendors products as market demands dictate. In addition Asset Vision can retrieve Software ID Tags. These tags, which are gradually being adopted by many of the larger software publishers, are a way in which the existence and licensing state of a particular licensable product can be unequivocally established.

Printer Usage Analysis

Asset Vision contains a wealth of information relating to local and network printer utilization. Using this data it is possible to identify print inefficiencies by easily spotting usage anomalies on printers with high consumable costs. **Asset Vision users have reduced their printer-to-employee ratio from one printer for every two employees to one printer for every 13 employees with no reduction in service to the employees.** This is also important for virtualized environments such as XenApp or a VDI implementation. The fewer peripherals required, the less network bandwidth and support effort are needed, driving down the cost of Terminal Services and VDI adoption.

Summary

Asset Vision can add considerable value to a SCCM implementation. Asset Vision extends the inventory and configuration management features of SCCM with forensic-level usage metering. The scope and depth of this metering enhances decision making for cost reduction, migration, and licensing in ways heretofore impossible. Organizations with a commitment to the automation of configuration management as indicated by the use of SCCM will immediately benefit from the additional level of intelligence provided by the state-of-the-art usage metering delivered by Asset Vision.

Learn more about Scalable's Asset Vision at **www.scalable.com/sccm-augment**, or email us to request a demo at **sales@scalable.com.**

About Scalable

Scalable Software, an innovator in IT Asset Management software since 1999, publishes the WinINSTALL suite of products and is the company behind Asset Vision®, a unified Cloud-based ITAM tool. Asset Vision drives expense out of IT, slashing the cost of administering, supporting, and updating traditional on-premise ITAM solutions. Asset Vision's agentless discovery easily populates, reconciles, and normalizes IT assets. Along with its comprehensive Software Asset Management layer, it swiftly enables accurate compliance reporting, reduces waste through application usage analytics, and precisely identifies unused software and features on all types of devices, even in BYOD scenarios. For more information: **www.scalable.com** or **info@scalable.com**.

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