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News from ECS Group



→ FEATURE

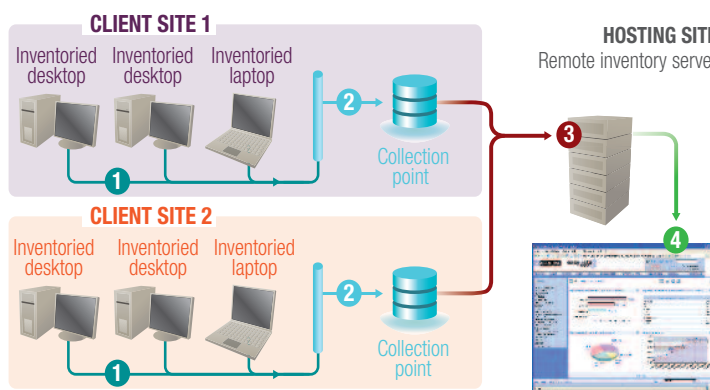
Knowledge of your IT assets as a strategic tool

Knowledge of a company's IT assets is an essential ingredient in any decision-making process – for both the IT Department and the rest of the company – and an underrated source of value-add. By benefiting from ECS' experience and solutions, companies can build a long-term strategy for capitalising on their IT estate data.

IT is becoming increasingly central to a business' performance. Strategic decisions at the highest level now rely on an accurate assessment of their impact in terms of IT, and the costs of upgrading and changing the IT system. This also applies to all the management and operational

monitoring of a business: knowledge – however detailed or basic – of IT components is no longer confined to the IT department but is essential for all the company's decision-makers. Once a technical prerequisite for internal purposes only, collecting and updating this information is fast becoming a service in its own right that the IT department must provide for decision-makers so they can monitor business.

THE ECS SOLUTION: HOW IT WORKS



- 1 Once the connection script is run the client workstation calls the agent at the collection point. The data is inventoried.
- 2 The data collected and the agent are sent to the collection point.
- 3 The consolidated data is sent to the hosted remote inventory server.
- 4 Result of the inventory can be consulted via the web console.

The shift away from the “one-off inventory” rationale

Many IT Directors, however, do not yet provide this data availability service. It is one thing to recognise the importance of analysing the existing situation before making a decision, but it is quite another to produce the necessary information, and the potential value of this information is therefore often overlooked. Inventories are often conducted for a specific project, and yield a limited amount of information. These types of inventory are not designed to be used by the company as a whole, or to provide answers to questions that fall outside the specific, limited scope of the task for which it was →

→ conducted. And yet it is precisely these unexpected questions that come up time and again from various departments or Management. Most IT Directors respond to such requests by carrying out time-consuming, often complex manual queries. This increasing demand for visibility over IT data is forcing IT departments to review their procedure for gathering and producing inventory data so that users' needs may be satisfied without affecting the IT department's productivity.

Assessing information needs

The solution to this problem requires a change of mindset: companies have to look beyond an inventory as a tool for one-off projects and see its strategic value and ability to deliver value-add for the business. Inventory data should be used for all areas of a business: instead of focusing on the result – the information at a given time – an inventory strategy involves identifying and satisfying requirements. These needs can vary according to the recipient of the information (IT department, Finance, etc.), but in all cases, the information must be available, complete, relevant and up-to-date when the user needs it.

Ensuring availability via automation

Fortunately, advances in technology and means of

communication mean that these needs can be met in many companies. Most inventory tasks can be automated and carried out remotely in a simple, unintrusive manner. At ECS, automated inventories are essential not only for leasing but also for infrastructure and desktop services. A remote inventory not only ensures permanent availability of information but offers the possibility of the same data being adapted to each recipient. Thus a single remote inventory can be used for a Finance Director once a year for managing fixed assets, and the Head of the Legal department to ensure software licence compliance. It will also enable the IT department to measure progress of any IT changes more efficiently.

ECS Solutions

One-off remote inventory

Whatever the leasing, infrastructure or desktop service project, ECS offers a remote inventory solution for asset tracking. After identifying the customer's requirements in terms of technology data, both within and outside the IT department, ECS will deploy an unintrusive, certified remote inventory solution in compliance with ITIL best practices. Available for Windows environments as an SaaS, the solution can start producing results within a matter of hours, without disrupting users or affecting the running of infrastructures. When necessary, this solution can be

→ INTERVIEW

Stefano Piccardo,
IT Manager
MECOF SRL,
ITALY



The operational and administrative flexibility of virtualisation

Founded in 1947, MECOF is one of the world's leading manufacturers of high-speed milling machines. In 2008, Mecof became part of DST group (Dörries Scharmann Technologie GmbH), the German machine tool manufacturer. Mecof asked ECS to build and implement a solution for modernising its IT system via virtualisation technologies.

Why did you need to upgrade your IT system?

MECOF has always firmly believed that innovation is the key to increasing our competitive edge and lowering direct and indirect costs. In terms of IT, this meant updating our hardware and software infrastructure. We

An aid to IT coordinating

In addition to making information more accessible for the various business units and departments within a company, an inventory strategy is truly beneficial when the process of regular data collection is turned into a tool for ensuring the ongoing improvement of IT performance and cost-cutting. By relying on ECS' expertise, IT Directors can, for example, quickly identify which upgrades need to be made via a detailed analysis of the elements in the asset base and subsequently establish priority and plan. A regular inventory of workstations also enables companies to adjust, in real time, help-desk procedures to suit the actual configurations deployed, and thereby optimise performance.

combined with an on-site physical inventory for equipment not connected to the remote inventory.

Ongoing remote inventory

In the long term, ECS helps clients to automate their remote inventory, consolidate information (for example with the company's Active Directory) and create customised dashboards to meet the needs of decision-makers, such as software licence management, allocating workstations to users, user access to shared resources, etc.

ECS Solutions

wanted ECS on board from the outset of the project to investigate the economical and technical aspects of building a virtualisation-based solution.

How did virtualisation meet your requirements?

ECS' solution enabled us to address two mutually contradictory concerns: upgrade our IT infrastructure in order to improve performance, whilst ensuring that the existing software packages continued to function correctly, in particular the specific tracking and production

test applications. We worked on server virtualisation, storage and optimising network access.

What are the results?

Our IT system has become more flexible and controllable. We now have an infrastructure that is not only ideal for our development projects but has also so far allowed us to save around €35,000. The virtualisation solution meant we were able to halve the number of servers we had and share our storage on a SAN, whilst rolling out a high availability backup solution. We

also upgraded the network to include Fibre Channel technology, and ECS assisted us in migrating our Lotus 5 email to Exchange 2007 and deploying Open Office for our office automation applications. The overall result was that we were able to update our entire IT infrastructure with minimal disruption to users as the existing software continues to work perfectly well and all the operations were carried out outside of office hours (nights and weekends).

What the expert says



CÉDRIC COUSIN

As Product Manager in ECS' IT Services Marketing Department, Cédric Cousin is in charge of developing desktop service offers for the group. He joined ECS in 1999 and has developed a number of value-add services including SaaS mode remote inventory and desktop outsourcing.

"Collecting data is one thing – how you then process and use it is quite another"

When choosing an inventory solution, it is vital to draw a distinction between collecting data and processing it in order to save the IT department long, tedious information reprocessing tasks. Not all remote inventory software packages can automatically translate the amount of RAM on a machine into a standard format. Instead of showing 512 MB, the software will show, say, 511,642,892 bytes. The issues associated with inventorying hardware configurations are even more crucial where software licence tracking is concerned: again, the data is rarely

presented in a homogenous, consistent way that can be easily interpreted by the uninitiated user. Very few inventory tools are able to standardise all the software releases from different vendors. In addition to slowing down response times, manual processing also creates problems with respect to software licence compliance. To eliminate this risk, ECS use Staff & Line's Easy Vista Discovery, an ASP mode (SaaS) solution featuring a library of over 160,000 software references. It is also the only tool specifically recommended by the BSA for software tracking.

→ For more info: www.ecs-group.com/solutions

INTERVIEW

ITIL V3: back to basics

Version 3 of the ITIL best practices refocuses on the primary concern of all companies, regardless of their size: the result in terms of value-add to their business.

IT is becoming increasingly central to a company's core business: whatever the size or industry sector, the quality of services delivered by the IT system can be clearly seen by customers, partners and suppliers. Whether it's a website used for sales or online ordering, or a VoIP call centre, whether the company has a hundred or ten thousand employees, the point is this: what counts is the result, the service provided, the value-add that IT can bring to a business. One of the key features of ITIL version 3 is precisely its focus on the primary aim of IT, that of delivering value-add to core business. In doing so, it helps companies solve a complex issue: that of determining what service offering IT must provide to the company and building these offers in the long term. From the infrastructure component to the end user, and through the application maintenance and upgrade processes, the aim of ITIL v3 is to deliver measurable benefits in terms of productivity and innovation capabilities.

An overview of the whole value chain

At the initial stages of implementing strategies for the ongoing improvement of IT processes, one of the main advantages of ITIL v3 is that it offers a flexible framework for viewing the entire value chain of a service offering, in terms of the intended result. Instead of following a strict, predefined process, companies can build their own ongoing improvement strategy based on ITIL best practices and suited to their resources and requirements: the ITIL recommendations can be tailored to suit the needs and context of each business. And the advantages are numerous, for example, in terms of outsourcing. Determining the desired result of a service delivered means that performance, and value for money, can be monitored and measured more effectively.



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ECS' leasing and infrastructure services are ISO 9001:2008 certified across Europe



ECS is one of the first companies in the world to obtain ISO 9001:2008 certification, and for all its areas of business. The ISO 9001:2008 standard guarantees ECS' clients optimal organisation and response times in order to satisfy their requirements and is a reflection of employees' expertise and the quality of services delivered. The new certification covers all the group's subsidiaries.

Yves Caparros succeeds Jacques Sorrel as president of ECS Group



After spending 5 years as the Group's Managing Director, Yves Caparros was appointed the new President of the Group at the beginning of this year. He succeeds Jacques Sorrel, who ran the group for 14 years. A graduate of the Institut Technique de Banque and the Centre d'Études Supérieures de Banque, Yves Caparros spent most of his career at Société Générale, where he held a variety of posts including Director for the Americas with the bank's risk department, and Executive Director of the group.

ECS continues its support for Passerelles Numériques' education project in Cambodia



Twenty-five IT students at the CIST, an IT training college in Phnom Pehn, are sponsored by ECS Group until they graduate in 2010. Since 2006, ECS has supported the college, which was set up by the charity Passerelles Numériques to provide vocational training for disadvantaged young people as a way out of the poverty into which they were born. This year, 4 more ECS employees will be taking part in a corporate volunteering programme in Cambodia, taking a few weeks out of their holiday time to train the teams in charge of finding work placements for students with local businesses.