

# CLEAR CHOICE TEST Desktop management

## LANDesk rules the roost in desktop management

BY PAUL FERRILL

In this round of testing desktop management software, we decided to analyze how well the tools performed from the perspective of five different roles, or sets of users. For example, looking at these products from the perspective of the help desk, we evaluated how well the products help diagnose and fix problems on remote desktops, and we looked at the deployment of software, imaging, personality transfer and upgrades.

We analyzed the products from the perspective of security in terms of patch management, anti-virus updates, and software application monitoring and metering. We also looked at the products' support for Cisco's Network Admission Control (NAC) and the protection they offered for mobile workers away from corporate networks.

We looked at these tools from the perspective of users — how well the products let them find and restore lost files, fix applications or reset their passwords. We took the perspective of IT executives in terms of how

the offerings produced accurate and informative software and hardware inventories and useful reports for CIOs, and how they addressed day-to-day management issues at the operational level.

We invited several top desktop management vendors to participate, as well as Altiris, LANDesk, Microsoft and Novell. CA had a new release of its Desktop Management Suite in beta, but it wasn't ready for release before we finished our testing. Numara Software (formerly Intuit) submitted its Track-It Enterprise product, which we reviewed separately, because it doesn't match up well with the other products tested.

Our Clear Choice Award goes to LANDesk for having a broad range of features that covered our five sets of users well, and had superior or security features.

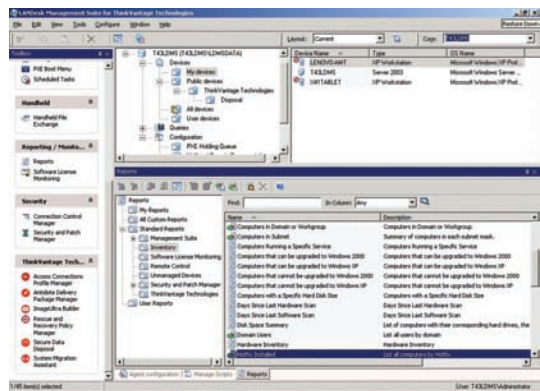
### LANDesk

LANDesk has provided the broadest-possible level of platform support in all its products since we've been testing its gear. Version 8.6 of the LANDesk Management Suite is no exception: It supports

multiple versions of Linux, Macintosh and Windows. The inclusion of the LANDesk Management Gateway makes it possible to manage a laptop or desktop system over the Internet. This release of Management Suite makes significant strides in its reporting capabilities. Previous versions delivered a set of canned reports and a simple report generator, but we found a more complete (although complex) capability in this release.

LANDesk really shines in the deployment arena. With Management Suite's support for Intel's Active Management Technology (AMT) (see a related story at www.networkworld.com, DocFinder: 1832), LANDesk has made deployment even more effective. We really liked being able to boot a remote PC from a local Integrated Drive Electronics device, such as an external USB drive or a CD or DVD. After booting, you can turn around and image the machine remotely if needed. The LANDesk OS Deployment Wizard guides you through the entire operating system deployment and migration process. Alternatively, LANDesk provides a software developers kit to let you develop customized deployments. LANDesk also can deploy images created with its tools or by other products, such as Symantec's Norton Ghost. A peer download capability makes it possible to deliver things such as large software updates faster at the local subnet level.

On the help desk front, LANDesk management console adds several new user-interface features that make finding information and accomplishing specific tasks a snap. We loved its tabs for quick function access and its ability to define a custom console layout to fit our needs. We did this easily by dragging windows around, closing or opening new windows, and clicking a button to save the layout. Getting information about specific workstations was quick and easy from the management con-



LANDesk's management console adds new user-interface features that make finding information a snap.

# NetResults

Product	<b>LANDesk Management Suite 8.6</b>	<b>Deployment Solution</b>	<b>SMS 2003 with Service Pack 1</b>	<b>ZENworks 7 Suite</b>
Vendor	<b>LANDesk</b>	<b>Altiris</b>	<b>Microsoft</b>	<b>Novell</b>
Price	\$89 per node for 1,000 nodes.	\$118 per node for 1,000 nodes.	\$60 per node for the basic SMS client, which doesn't include Server 2003 or SQL Server required to run the product.	\$163 per node for 1,000 nodes.
Pros	Excellent and responsive administration console makes it easy to find the information you need; great security tools; excellent imaging and deployment solutions.	Wide range of modules addressing all the user roles; comprehensive security auditing tool; good cross-platform support.	Good security tools for patching and auditing user workstations; new imaging tool integrates well with the other tools; other solutions such as Data Protection Manager and Microsoft Identity Integration Server cover other features that we tested.	Great cross-platform support; only product we tested with a comprehensive Linux management tool.
Cons	Lack of a Web-based reporting tool.	Web-based console somewhat cumbersome to navigate when you're looking for a specific piece of information.	No support for Cisco NAC or similar quarantines; user interface requires multiple mouse clicks to drill down to information about specific items.	ConsoleOne interface requires too many mouse clicks to get many jobs done.
Score	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>2.8</b>

## The Breakdown

	LANDesk	Altiris	Microsoft	Novell
Deployment <b>20%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
Help desk <b>20%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Security <b>20%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
IT management <b>20%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
End user features <b>20%</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total score</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>2.8</b>

Scoring Key: **5:** Exceptional; **4:** Very good; **3:** Average; **2:** Below average; **1:** Subpar or not available

sole. A remote-control session is initiated by right-clicking the option for "any system" listed under "devices." Remote control worked smoothly and gave us the ability to execute a program remotely, transfer a file, initiate a chat session or reboot the computer. We also could draw things on the screen to point things out, lock out the remote keyboard and blank the screen.

LANDesk also excels in the security arena. The LANDesk Trusted Access application adds scan and block capabilities to

the basic patch and update tools of previous versions. The application uses a quarantined network environment for any computer that doesn't have the current LANDesk client and up-to-date patches installed. For delivering patches across an enterprise, LANDesk uses its patented targeted multicasting technology to deliver critical updates quickly. The system also has a unique twist: To help speed patch delivery it prestages updates across an enterprise while a patch is tested. Once the

patch is cleared for deployment, it can be delivered to each desktop much faster, because the patch resides on a local subnet.

On the IT management side, LANDesk has made significant improvements since the last version we tested. The canned reports provide a wide variety of information without any need for customization, although you can modify them if you want. The system also includes a full-featured report generator for building custom reports from scratch.

LANDesk has some key new features that will appeal to end users. There are a number of benefits for Lenovo (formerly IBM) desktop and laptop users from the integration LANDesk has done with its existing tools. The ImageUltra Builder allows local users to make individual system backups, but these can be scheduled also and performed automatically through LANDesk.

## Conclusion

Altiris and LANDesk offer a lot of capabilities that address our user areas very well. Altiris takes more of an à la carte approach to picking and choosing modules to meet specific needs, but LANDesk offers virtually everything we needed in its LANDesk Management Suite. For the most part, Microsoft covers all the bases, but not with the winner's flair and added capabilities, such as integration with Cisco's NAC security framework.

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To see this review in its entirety, please log onto URL <http://www.networkworld.com/reviews/2006/012306-desktop-test.html>