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Remote Control From Intel

Software eases relationship between HQ and offsite PCs, handhelds

By MITCH WAGNER

Intel says its new management software will help IT managers get a handle on handheld devices and remotely configured PCs.

Version 6.4 of its LANDesk management software searches the network for all devices connected to PCs. Portable devices—which include removable storage media, printers and handheld computers—are proliferating. Connecting a handheld device to a PC requires the PC to recognize the type of portable device it is. LANDesk software recognizes this, as well as the version of the software it is hosting. This information can now be acted upon.

LANDesk will be helpful to IT managers in a number of ways. It will help when users complain that their handheld computers don't work, or when the handheld's software might be interfering with other applications on the system, said Tony Bailey, an analyst with Enterprise Management Associates. It also offers security advantages, he said. Users frequently synchronize sensitive information with handheld computers. The LANDesk software will help track which employees have that capability.

"The last thing I want is for someone to be able to access our sales contact database," Bailey said. "If I'm carrying that around on a PDA, and someone steals it or I lose it, they might gain access to that information."

IT departments are notoriously bad at keeping track of inventory. At least a PC or printer is big and heavy and easily visible in someone's office. A handheld computer, however, is designed to be slipped into a pocket and carried unobtrusively. LANDesk can help keep tabs on these devices.

LANDesk Version 6.4 also supports automatically fixing broken applications on a PC. If an

OFFSITE SUPPORT

Intel's LANDesk supports remote and wireless workers by:

- Automatically fixing applications with broken, missing, or corrupted components, even if they were not initially installed by LANDesk.
- Detecting handheld devices, such as Palm computers and Pocket PCs, which have been installed on the PC.
- Supporting both Apple Macintosh and PC clients.

Source: Intel

application is missing a component or has a corrupted component, the software either automatically makes a copy of the component from a local installation file on the PC or downloads the component from the Internet or an intranet server. Without this capability, known as “self-healing,” IT managers have to reinstall files by hand.

Many desktop management packages offer self-healing. What makes LANDesk unusual is that applications using LANDesk need not be installed first. Competitive products that automatically repair applications require that pre-existing applications be removed and reinstalled with the management software. This is an expensive proposition for large networks.

The application repair functionality will mean substantial savings for Convergys users, said Keith Oliverson, project manager at the company, which provides outsourcing telephone customer support to a wide range of customers. He added the company has 55,000 PCs, many of them shared by three or four operators working in round-the-clock shifts. About 30 percent of calls to Convergys’s help desk are for applications that are broken, and the company expects the new version of LANDesk to eliminate those calls.

“I can sit here in my office in Ogden, Utah, and completely overhaul a machine in Omaha, Neb., and reboot it,” Oliverson said. “This has the potential to save us massive amounts of time and money.” The new version supports Windows 2000 and Apple Macintosh desktops, in addition to Windows 9x and NT.

The upgrade, available now, is free to users with a subscription to LANDesk software. Subscriptions are priced on a per-user basis; for instance, a 1,000-node installation is priced at \$50 per node. Competitive products include Microsoft Systems Management Server, Novell ZEN-works and Novadigm’s line of management software.



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