

White Paper

Intelligent and Joined Up



Managing a network is a time consuming, complex and often uncoordinated task. Technicians may have to work blind to try and solve issues and this is where problems can occur. Intelligent Infrastructure Management is a smart way to manage a network, but it has always been deemed as too expensive. With technological advances, though, and a world where time costs, can the ROI speak for itself?

Intelligent Infrastructure Management

A peculiar phenomenon occurred in the recent recession. While the economy seemed to stagnate, technology continued to advance, and now that an economic recovery is in tow, many organisations are waking up to the realisation that they do not want to be, technologically, left behind. Research has brought to life that worldwide IT spending is on the rebound, and it appears that many businesses are catching up on purchasing new equipment, and this has, inevitably, led to an increase in the existence of hardware infrastructure, such as PCs, servers, storage and network equipment.

More IT equipment will undoubtedly lead to greater pressure on already overworked IT managers, and more than half of all IT managers admit that their greatest challenge currently includes managing the ever-increasing number of devices and networks to accommodate mobile and telecommuting workers. When looking to purchase new equipment, 80% of IT managers reveal that they want immediate payback in terms of minimum disruption of business continuity, and seamless integration with existing solutions. Research has shown that companies can save as much as 20-30% of operating costs with more rigorous management of the physical environment. The fact, then, that only 14% of European organisations have a fully integrated management framework is a big concern, and even more alarming, as much as 25% of them still manage their servers manually.

Managing infrastructure manually is time-consuming and costly. With various teams in charge of different aspects of IT infrastructure, and no automated processes in place, human error is inevitable. Information is not consolidated, so when, for example, a cable or connection is detached, the resulting downtime trying to locate it can be very long, costing the organisation substantially.

This is where Intelligent Infrastructure Management (IIM) solutions are hugely advantageous. They help companies streamline the processes and manage their infrastructure. They provide accurate and real-time documentation, monitoring and real-time connectivity management as well as easy management and maintenance of all aspects of the physical layer.

Initial adopters of IIM were traditionally mission-critical enterprises. However, all businesses today face universal challenges, which include things like attaining the lowest total cost of ownership for assets, improving utilisation, tracking IT assets and protecting sensitive information. Companies, both large and small, require a system that quickly responds to moves, adds and changes (MACs) and fully optimises the infrastructure.

IIM is the installation and incorporation of intelligent processes to manage physical infrastructure, together with network devices and service applications. It offers a holistic approach to IT infrastructure management and allows IT personnel to control resources, processes and users all as one collaborative unit while effortlessly performing MACs. All information regarding the connections of cabling and other devices is automatically collected, thereby reducing mistakes, delays and unnecessary expenses.

Anytime, Anywhere

An IIM created for small or medium sized businesses (SMB) is usually easy to deploy, install and implement. Combining hardware and software components, the system easily connects to panels in the communication racks and to the network, providing immediate connectivity information. Furthermore, IIM offers both onsite and remote accessibility from internet web browsers, benefitting the many telecommuting and mobile IT personnel who can log onto the system wherever there is internet connectivity, allowing greater flexibility and control.

Contrary to popular belief, certain IIM solutions do not demand high levels of skills to operate. Based on a 'plug-and-play' approach, certain IIM solutions offer a user-friendly, permission-based GUI, and this can actually improve employees' understanding of the broader picture. With no software installation required, the administrator sees an accurate picture of the connectivity status anywhere, at anytime. The GUI shows all changes detected in real-time, and when an unplanned change has occurred, the system sends a notification and immediately alerts the operator both via the system GUI and email. An additional key feature is the support of accurate and uncomplicated uploading of mass data for

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larger or more complex organisations handling huge amounts of information.

The more advanced IIM solutions provide the ability to automatically collect and analyse the entire connectivity data. They calculate the optimal resource allocation and produce a multi-team work order that is then tracked until it is fully completed. Furthermore, certain IIM solutions with advanced automated provisioning capabilities provide real decision making tools offering different connectivity alternatives according to the organisation's pre-defined logic and rules. They can also come with hand-held device support that offers the engineer in the field an interactive user-friendly application, providing online access to all the required information. It interacts with the main system, optimises workflow and prevents additional human errors.

Keeping Account of Assets

Security is another advantage of IIM solutions. Last year Symantec found that each SMB suffered at least one security breach, with almost 40% blaming it on human error. More recently, Cisco polled more than 500 IT professionals who reported 41% of employees are accessing the network with unsupported mobile devices and this poses a great security risk. In fact more than half of Cisco's respondents claimed their biggest security liability was users accessing the network with unsupported mobile devices and running unauthorised applications. IIM acts almost as an 'invisible employee' for an organisation. It provides alerts as well as real-time identification of illegal or unscheduled connections or disconnections to the corporate network, as well as any unauthorised devices. In addition to detection of the logical location or addresses, IIM isolates the exact physical location of the illegal devices. Offsite locations are observed from a central management location, which can be entered from any location and most alerts can even be handled remotely.

IIM also serves as an IT asset management system; a particular benefit as companies are put through greater government scrutiny and more stringent legislation requirements. IIM maintains other useful information about each device which is automatically collected and stored as part of its records. This makes manipulating, viewing and reporting data, which is critical in decision-making, simple and cost-effective.

Additional Control

The more advanced IIM systems provide additional security and environment management features, ensuring control over electricity failures, systems restart, configurations and high temperatures. Conditions such as humidity and temperature are constantly monitored and even obsolete or malfunctioning equipment can be easily detected, corrected or replaced.

Selected solutions allow top management to oversee their organisations. Through online management tools they can track key performance indicators (KPIs), as well as early-warning indicators, real-time analysis and alerts and guided drill-down capabilities to pinpoint the root cause of a problem.

Control

No matter what the size of an organisation, successful management of the network and its infrastructure is imperative for a profitable business. IT personnel, from the largest to the smallest companies, will always face obstacles, including unplanned downtime, urgent changes, security breaches or natural disasters. IIM empowers organisations across the globe to implement cross-disciplinary processes. With affordable and powerful management solutions for all types of businesses available, IIM cuts down costs and improves total cost of ownership to ensure business efficiency, fast and accurate service deployment and effective asset utilisation.

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