

Looking to move to Windows 7 - How NetSupport DNA Can Streamline the Process

Company X has made a decision to migrate its desktop user base from Windows XP to Windows 7. They know this process will be challenging and are looking for solutions that will simplify the process and minimise both user downtime and capital outlay.

First up, Company X needs to know all the computers across its infrastructure, before the scale of the project can be assessed a full picture needs to be created. On installing NetSupport DNA, the software will automatically discover all computers across the enterprise and allow for remote deployment of the NetSupport client component. Once the client has been deployed, DNA will automatically gather a full hardware and software inventory for each PC. Once the Company has a full picture of all computers within the enterprise, the next step is to identify those computers that can be upgraded to Windows 7, those that are upgradeable via hardware changes to meet the requirements of Windows 7 and those that will need replacement. DNA features a unique query tool that allows an organisation to create rules-based containers referred to as "Dynamic Groups", that will allow easy identification of all computers that meet the defined rules. So now the company has three containers identifying machines ready for update, in need of upgrades or due for replacement.

Step 2 is to have a full picture of all the software deployed across the network, to ensure they are all suitable for use on Windows 7. In some cases, later versions of the software will be required, some will need to be run in compatibility mode and hopefully not too many will be incompatible. In addition to planning which software the organisation will roll out on their new desktops, given the cost of software licenses and their ongoing maintenance costs, savings can be achieved by identifying which users actually utilise the installed applications and which no longer have need of the software. NetSupport DNA includes application metering, delivering a complete picture by PC or user of which applications are used on a daily or weekly basis. Potentially, this might reduce the number of upgraded licenses needed for key applications, or save time researching alternatives to legacy software that is actually no longer used. These two elements ensure the migration to Windows 7 carries the least cost implication and disruption to user activity. There is a third element however to the software on each user's computer, namely the files they create during their daily use. In most cases, key documents (i.e. .DOC, .XLS) are stored centrally on a server to ensure they are included in routine data backups. As part of the upgrade process, it is important to ensure critical documents are not lost because they are stored locally and on an ongoing basis, best practice requires that all key documents and resources are included in backups. NetSupport DNA offers a unique resources scan to ensure no documents or files of any type are missed during this process.

Step 3. Once all the computers have been identified, Company X may be ready to deploy out the new operating system and desktop for all their users. However, this period is the most likely to generate user assistance or support calls and be the time where incompatibilities or other technical issues are most likely to occur. NetSupport DNA provides both proactive alerting as well as optional user remote control to ensure all issues are dealt with as quickly as possible and minimise user downtime. The alerting component within DNA is fully configurable by the IT Department and can warn about common issues such as low disk space, excessive CPU usage, network activity, stalled printer queues and so on, as well as more detailed monitoring of SQL servers, web servers and such like. The key to DNA is to proactively warn the IT Department of potential issues rather than rely on user vigilance or constant monitoring of the management console.

Step 4. Once all our users have migrated to Windows 7, and initial teething problems have been addressed, the key requirements of any organisation's successful IT policy should continue, namely maximise user uptime, minimise time wastage and manage the IT infrastructure for the minimum of operational cost. DNA alerting and inventory history ensures swift resolution to problems that might occur across the enterprise, the unique internet metering component allows for control of internet activity by users, including by time of day, and ensures productivity is not lost by excessive time spent on, for example, social networking sites and the unique energy monitoring component provides a clear summary of potential wastage across the enterprise by machines being left on out of hours.

Step 5. While all our users may be happy with their new desktops and re-deployed software, it is inevitable that users will move between departments within the organisation and require different software tools to meet their changing job roles. With that in mind, DNA provides two methods to deliver new applications to its users. The first approach is a traditional push-based software distribution, allowing a Network Manager to push out a software application to any number of selected users. The second approach is to publish "ready for distribution" applications to departments where at any point members of that department can pull available applications directly to their desktop. In a practical example, user X moves from Admin to Sales. As soon as their PC is assigned to the new department, within AD, NetSupport DNA will reflect this within its hierarchy and the user will have instant access from their system tray to all applications that have been published for the Sales department. They can select the appropriate application they need and begin the installation.

For all of the above, DNA also provides one of the most compelling cost savings of all - time. Reduced time to install (typically measured in 1-2 hours), reduced time for setup and implementation (by linking directly to your existing AD infrastructure) and by reducing ongoing operational costs by identifying software licenses that are not being used and can be re-deployed, computers that can be upgraded rather than retired and by controlling user usage of system resources.

NetSupport DNA has been designed to cater for all of the operational challenges encountered when managing a small or mid-size enterprise, offers a wealth of unique and innovative features to simplify this process and ultimately, stands by its claim by ensuring a customer can download a trial copy and be operational (without training or external assistance) within an hour.