Axios
SYSTEMS

ITSM & ITAM SOFTWARE

Finding the balance between compliance and flexibility

Government agency achieves compliance while offering end users choice

The customer in numbers

8000
staff

10000
assets

500
monthly install requests

600
ITAM and ITSM toolset requirements

The Challenge

The customer was under pressure to get their desktop systems in line with a complex set of regulatory, security and software license policies.

They needed to get compliant quickly—and stay compliant on an ongoing basis—without the manual effort overheads that were consuming valuable IT resources.

It was necessary to "refresh" all desktop workstations to ensure the installed applications and configurations were compliant. This had to be done quickly and without disrupting end user productivity —an essential requirement for a busy government agency where disruptions to public services can quickly become newspaper headlines. Manual onsite installs weren't an option. They needed a mechanism by which they could gain and maintain compliance, quickly, easily, and inexpensively—which meant intelligent automation would be at the core of the solution.

One of the key challenges was that a blanket desktop refresh was not feasible. Different departments needed a different set of apps and configurations. They needed to gain compliance in a phased manner—department by department.

Compliance can often conflict with flexibility. The customer understood that staff needed flexibility in terms of methods and apps to provide the best possible service to citizen customers. The challenge was to offer this flexibility in the context of a highly regulated environment.

Historically, desktops were locked down to enable compliance—and that wasn't going to change. End users couldn't install their own apps, so requests were routed to the desktop support team. With 8,000 employees, the IT team was receiving 500 requests for application installs every month—putting a severe strain on resources and making it difficult to complete new IT projects.

To provide more efficient flexibility, the IT department needed a solution that would allow end users to select and install apps from a "safe" list— without manual intervention from the desktop support team.

Challenge

Bring all workstations into compliance with strict government, security and software license policies while simultaneously offering end users choices in the technology they use.

Solution

Automate remote workstation checking and remediation to ensure ongoing compliance. Implement a Service Catalog to offer end users a "Software Shop"—a set of safe technology choices.

Results

End-to-end automation of workstation compliance, freeing up IT to tackle improvement projects. Given more choices, end users are happier and more productive

"Compliance requirements frequently conflict with the need for flexibility. The most common strategy is to simply lock down workstations, but that gives end users no choice. For our customers, assyst helps them to nail down compliance yet allow end users a choice in the technologies they use. When they have these choices, they can be more productive and happy about their jobs. And happy about IT."

Daniel Maia, *assyst* **Consultant, Axios Systems**

The Solution

assyst enabled the customer to manage logical segments of their network—in this case, departments. For each department, a standard workstation image was created and deployed from a central location—eliminating the need for desk visits. Working systematically, the customer refreshed all the organization's desktops, with installs and configurations applied overnight to avoid disruption to end user productivity.

Now, automated compliance auditing means that any workstation plugged into any part of the network is regularly checked, guaranteeing compliance on an ongoing basis. If a new workstation with a blank drive is plugged into the network, it is automatically discovered, checked, and installed with the correct set of applications and configurations for that department.

The *assyst* Service Catalog was implemented as a Software Shop, offering end users easy access to a set of free and open source software tools like Acrobat Reader, Flash, Chrome, and Firefox.

For new staff, a blank workstation plugged in to the network on the day before their arrival is automatically set up overnight—ready for the user the next morning. New staff get the setup they need—every time—with just a few minutes of effort from the desktop support team.

When activated, a back-end service automation process installs the chosen software on the end user's machine with zero intervention from IT. Now, IT customers don't have to wait for a desktop support engineer to visit; installation happens straight away, so there is no impediment to productivity.

From the end user perspective, desktop workstations remain locked down at the technical level—they cannot directly install any new software. Through the Service Catalog Software Shop, flexibility is permitted without compromising compliance. End users are empowered with access to a broader spectrum of technology. And the desktop team and compliance teams are empowered with control over which groups can install and use which software tools.
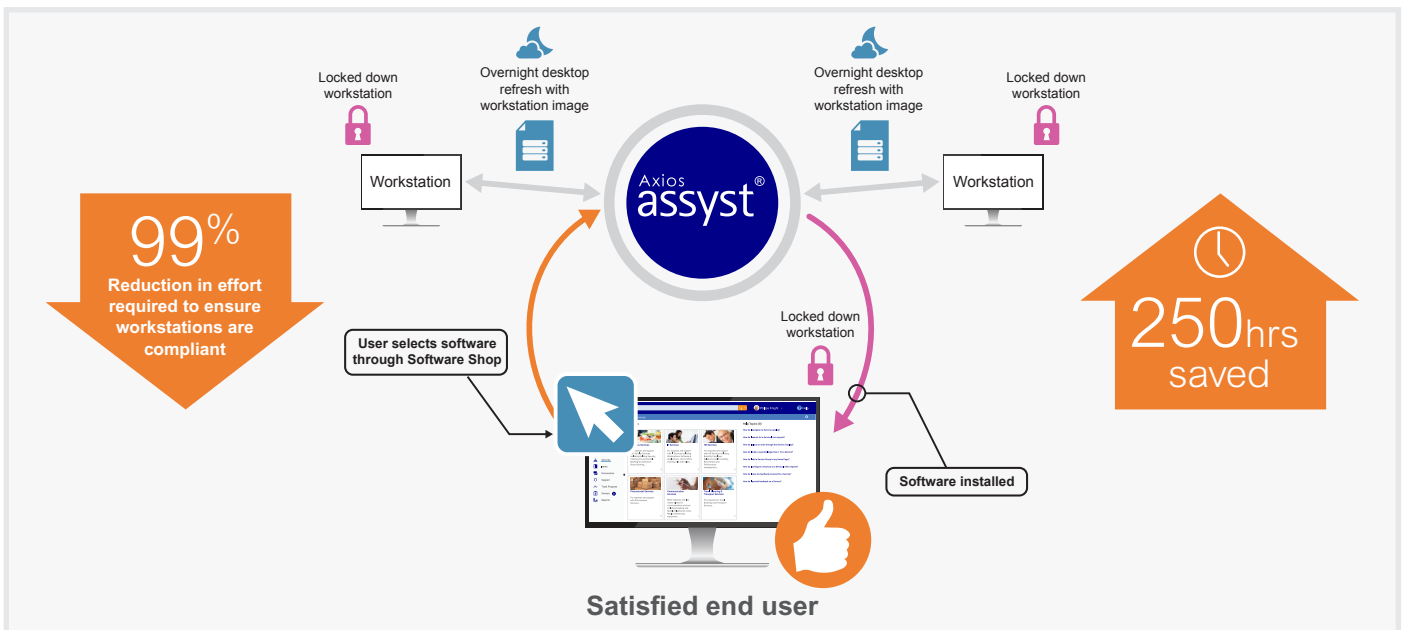
Success Achieved

Within 18 months the customer successfully implemented the technology and processes required to achieve full, auditable compliance—and remain compliant going forward. This timescale included one month to set up the Software Shop (app store) within a broader Service Catalog implementation and two months to deploy 1,500 new workstations—a task that would have taken ten to twelve months without automation. Automation has made IT more streamlined and agile to changing business needs.

Now, all workstations are automatically kept in line with the latest policies, controlled from a central point. But, at the same time, end users are offered a choice of "safe" software from the Software Shop to help them perform better. The use of automation has allowed a balance to be struck between compliance and flexibility; simplifying desktop support, Software Asset Management and compliance, while keeping end users happy and productive.

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