

Lost and Found

Near Perfect Tracking Accuracy Can be Achieved

For some, the idea of knowing exactly where every computer is located and what's on them is a far-off goal. But at Grant Thornton, they've been able to achieve nearly 100% accuracy in tracking their IT asset inventory. Grant Thornton LLP oversees a widely-distributed computer fleet, providing laptops and desktops to thousands of employees across 49 locations. On a daily basis, their IT must effectively transfer computer assets between numerous employees and locales, contending with leasing expenses, licensing and regulatory compliance, and security measures along the way. As most IT managers are painfully aware, this movement can be incredibly difficult to track with traditional tools and can lead to unbudgeted costs.

Poor Tracking Accuracy Challenges Lifecycle Management

A large leased-computer fleet means that lifecycle management is among IT's chief concerns, especially with mobile computers. Additionally, in order to manage costs and avoid expensive penalties, Grant Thornton's IT is required to return all machines to the vendor at the end of each lease term - regardless of the computer's condition. Like any security-conscious company, they must also ensure that machines are wiped clean of data prior to retirement. Thus, the timely retrieval of leased computers is crucial from both a financial and security perspective.

When Grant Thornton looked to improve their IT asset management they realized that tracking down machines for the end-of-lease process proved challenging, especially with a large number of dispersed computers residing beyond IT's physical control. The company's existing IT asset management system failed to provide visibility into off-the-network assets, meaning that, at any given time, over 20% of the computers were unaccounted for and thus impossible to track and manage.

The company therefore had an inaccurate picture of where machines were located, what was on them and who was using them. Poor visibility meant that the 'managed experience' often significantly differed from what was actually on hand.

While not an uncommon state for some companies, it was unacceptable for Grant Thornton. Identifying and locating certain machines at the end of each lease term was difficult, and given the lease penalties, failure to do so was costly.

As the company - and its computer population - continued to grow at a rapid pace, IT knew that it needed to control costs by improving its asset tracking capabilities and enhancing lifecycle management processes. Thus, the company looked for an IT asset management (ITAM) solution that would increase its asset tracking accuracy and improve the management of its lease fleet.

Elements of an Effective Solution

As Grant Thornton evaluated what their ideal solution to this problem would be, it was apparent that asset tracking systems requiring a computer to be connected to the company network could not accommodate their dispersed and highly mobile population. An off-the-network tracking solution was necessary, so a system which could track computers via any internet connection - and thus maintain visibility into remote and mobile machines - was ideal.

Auditing and reporting were also key requirements for Grant Thornton's new ITAM solution - up-to-date reports that indicated where a machine was located, who was using it and what software was installed on it were critical to the lifecycle management process. Thus, the company required a solution which could provide comprehensive asset reports for each of its computers on a daily basis, so lease and licensing compliance could be monitored, allocation streamlined and regulatory compliance maintained.

Finally, to accommodate the company's rapid growth and streamline IT processes across its widely distributed fleet, the company needed a solution that could be easily and rapidly implemented in each of Grant Thornton's 49 locations and scale with its growth. A Software-as-a-Service solution was therefore best-fit, as it requires no additional IT infrastructure and is quickly available via the internet. This means that the solution can be rapidly implemented with minimal IT resources. Particularly pertinent to a growing organization,



SaaS is also easily scalable.

With these elements in mind, Grant Thornton selected Computrace® - an IT asset management, data protection and managed computer theft recovery solution by Absolute® Software.

Optimized Tracking Accuracy Leads to Improved Lifecycle Management

Since implementing a solution which tracks computers regardless of their physical location, Grant Thornton has seen its tracking accuracy increase by nearly 20%. The company now has visibility into machines both on and off the network, which allows the company to maintain 99.7% tracking accuracy.

This improved accuracy has in turn allowed for better lifecycle management. The company has used up-to-date asset reports to help streamline lease processes, which had previously proved inefficient. Automated reports provide a detailed account of where machines are located and when they are due back, helping IT to proactively organize the end-of-lease process. IT has also made use of end-user messaging tools, which remind users to prepare for an upcoming machine switch-over, and further reduce the time and staff necessary to retrieve computers. Thousands of dollars in lease penalties have been avoided as a result, as well as a substantial amount of IT resources.

An added benefit of improved tracking accuracy is enhanced security – IT can now better monitor machine movement and activity to proactively respond to suspicious circumstance. To complement these enhanced monitoring capabilities, the solution Grant Thornton chose also provides a remote data delete tool and managed theft recovery service, helping to data secure and avoid loss due to theft.

Further integral to Grant Thornton’s IT asset management, improved visibility and auditing abilities have helped to maintain regulatory compliance. By monitoring machines regardless of their physical location and by maintaining automated, up-to-date asset reports for all machines, the company maintains the documentation necessary to comply with legislation such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, the HIPPA Act and California Senate Bill 1386.

Looking Forward

With the new ITAM system in place, Grant Thornton is confident that the company will continue to realize greater returns in their initial investment. Combining IT asset manage tools with new auditing and leasing processes, Grant Thornton is now working towards a longer term goal of zero percent machine loss.

Geoff Glave
Senior Product Manager
Absolute Software Corporation



Absolute Software allows you to streamline inventory, enhance security & achieve cost savings

- Track and audit computers with 100% accuracy - on or off the network
- Obtain hardware and software inventories to maintain license and regulatory compliance
- Utilize a tamper resistant, firmware-based agent to inventory computers
- Protect sensitive data with a remote data delete feature and recover stolen computers
- Use a Software-as-a-Service model that requires no additional IT infrastructure