

## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

### LANDesk Software: Version 8 Including Patch Management

Frederick W. Broussard

#### IDC OPINION

LANDesk Software released the latest version of its Desktop Management Suite in October 2003. This release comes as the vendors that perform OS migration, software distribution, remote control, software license monitoring, and IT asset management now additionally deal with the requirements to address frequent patches that form part of the IT administrator's tasks. Existing vendors within these markets have to address speedy payback from any solution they purchase. With this backdrop, this new version offers the following features:

- ☒ The single database schema, with increased scalability, manages 10,000 desktops, servers, and mobile devices from a single server and up to 200,000 devices in a single rolup database.
- ☒ The new console provides a clean and easy-to-use interface, role-based administration, and certificate-based security.
- ☒ Patch management is an additional add-on feature to version 8 but marks LANDesk's entry in addressing frequent issues associated with regular patch updates.



## **IN THIS STUDY**

This IDC study discusses the recent release of LANDesk Software product LANDesk Management Suite 8. It highlights new features and discusses how the product handles four typical tasks in this version, including patch management.

## **SITUATION OVERVIEW**

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### **Introduction**

IT managers have multiple tools available to them to manage their client/server modeled computing environments, but they still have to deal with many ways to set up their own architectures for managing the tools they already have, as well as addressing the business requirements that force changes in the way they support that client/server architecture. They also deal with managing change in their own workforce, migrations from one operating environment, and changing business priorities that force changing budget priorities. Add to that an environment that needs to manage and support the help desk, and prioritization forces the adoption of best practices to manage changes through the IT department. Then add frequent patch releases to address vulnerabilities or deficiencies within software applications or operating environments, and the IT manager's plate stays full.

LANDesk Software, along with other vendors, provides solutions to manage the desktop, laptop, server, and handheld environments. After its spinout from Intel in 2002, LANDesk Software has continued updating and improving its existing products, adding new functionality such as OS deployment and profile migration, software license monitoring, and patch management.

This document looks at LANDesk's latest release, LANDesk Management Suite 8, from a simplified standpoint; that is, it looks at the top level of where on the product console an IT administrator performs four typical tasks. It is not a product evaluation, so it does not give a grade on whether the product meets some type of standard. This document does, however, provide an assessment of whether or not the product is competitive with other products in the market.

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### **Technology Positioning**

First, let's define the term scalability: Thrown around liberally by both vendors and IT administrators, the term scalability is herein defined as the ability to support machines from one server. The more users or desktops that a company can support from a single server, the more scalable the company is. LANDesk claims to support 10,000 users per core server and up to 200,000 users in its roll-up database. Of course, individual IT departments can adjust the number of devices supported by any one server, depending on company network architecture, system management tasks to be performed, and size of the operating system to be migrated.

## **Tasks**

### **New Machine Setup**

LANDesk does require a Windows 2000 server machine, running at least an SQL database. Minimum requirements are 256MB of RAM and a Pentium 3 processor. But the larger the number of machines to be managed, the larger the amount of RAM needed, and LANDesk expects a large number of devices under management to need about 1GB of RAM.

### **New Machines Discovery**

Once the console is installed, unmanaged device discovery is clicked (from toolbox); a scanner configuration does discovery, and (for preexisting LANDesk clients) it can do common base agent (CBA) — a network scan of the IP fingerprint — by going through the IP stack, by searching the NT domain, or by the LDAP directory structure. The LDAP in this case includes Active Directory as well as Novell. Machine discovery can also be set by IP range, and it can be set to scan on a schedule or scan immediately.

Any machines, printers, or network devices that are on the network are discovered. They are highlighted through client setup task, right clicked, and dragged and dropped to send the agent to that machine. As long as a device is plugged into the network and turned on so that it requests an IP address, the device can be found and discovered. For embedded devices, this means that the handheld device must be connected to the desktop through a wireless network, or at least a cradle through a USB port. LANDesk Handheld manager includes bandwidth through the LANDesk Management Suite 8 console, but it is a separate console. Otherwise, LANDesk Management Suite 8 will discover handheld devices if they are in the cradle and are plugged into the PDAs through the port. Enhanced security comes from view and action-based rights as well as a public key encryption between the core server and client. Role-based administration limits what management tasks administrators can do to which clients.

### **Distributing a Package**

Image.exe will create an image of target machines, and then that image only needs to be distributed to other like new systems, or it can be supported for OS migration. An IT administrator can create a package through LANDesk package builder (LANDesk and Wise Solutions have a reseller agreement, and integration between LANDesk and Wise is available). Package builder uses snapshot technology to create a package, and there is a packages directory on the Web server. The LANDesk distribution wizard automatically builds a script to support distribution to targeted machines. The resulting script then drags and drops a single machine, the machines resulting from a query, or the machines identified in an organization users group. This can be set to run immediately or scheduled for a future time.

### **Patch Management**

Patch management is a new feature in LANDesk Management Suite 8, but it is only offered as a separate installation and is not part of the basic configuration. Although the normal distribution process would support delivery of patches for any application

supported on the initial image. LANDesk's patch management combines vulnerability assessment with patch deployment. LANDesk gathers vulnerability and patch data from multiple sources including a license agreement with Ecora. LANDesk certifies that the content is valid, meaning the vulnerability list and patches are tested for conflicts and dependences. The current tool supports Windows and Solaris as well as six different languages. Patches are downloaded from LANDesk's patch service and compared with the targeted machines. The benefits of this approach include the following:

- ☒ **Trusted source.** LANDesk's patches are tested and verified by a third party other than the vendor. Dependencies and conflicts between patches are identified in test notes.
  
- ☒ **Vulnerability with the downloaded patch.** LANDesk Patch Manager verifies that the patch is installed using a number of methods that depend on the original vulnerability. For example, if the vulnerability is described by a registry key in Windows, Patch Manager actually checks registry keys and checksums (but not DLLs) to see if the patch actually went to each targeted multicast machine to ensure the vulnerability is eliminated.

Additionally, integration with Active Directory or any LDAP directory is easy. The LANDesk Management Suite 8 has a directory manager, and this part of the LANDesk Management Suite 8 console can import the IT department's directory structure. LDAP-compliant directories are imported into the console and can be used to distribute packages, patches, or any other system management function. Because they import directly from the directory, updates to the directory (e.g., adding users to an OU) are automatically included to the LANDesk console.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

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### Vendor Profile

LANDesk Software is a 2002 spinout of Intel Corp. The division of Intel that was responsible for the development, marketing, and support of the LANDesk Management Suite was spun out completely intact and remains headquartered to this day in Utah.

LANDesk's strategy is to provide best-in-class software solutions for the midsize enterprise. LANDesk's customer base typically has 1,500–5,000 desktops, although the company boasts of having customers with more than 10,000 devices under management. LANDesk uses OEM and direct marketing to drive a telesales force and a direct sales force.

One market trend affecting LANDesk has been this move toward solutions that provide systems management functionality across software distribution, inventory management, and remote control as well as across multiple devices in answer to the IT department's need for simpler, easy-to-install solutions. The company has partnered with XcelleNet to address mobile device management for handhelds.

## ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE

For vendors, LANDesk is a competitor that bears continued watching. While the scalability argument may work with some customers with more than 10,000 seats under management, LANDesk has a solution that can be installed within a few hours. Any vendor that has a software distribution, asset management, or remote control solution that takes more than a few days to install, with additional requirements that need more than a few servers, may have workgroup departments within their customer base that would be willing to consider this solution.

For IT administrators, LANDesk has a relatively simple-to-install solution that can manage desktops, servers, and laptops on the road and on the LAN. With the appropriate snap-ins, the solution can manage handheld devices and also perform vulnerability assessments on patches for distribution into the enterprise.

## LEARN MORE

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### Related Research

- ☒ *Worldwide Software Distribution Forecast and Analysis, 2002–2007* (IDC #30246, forthcoming)
- ☒ *Worldwide IT Asset Management Software Forecast and Analysis, 2002–2007* (IDC #30277, forthcoming)
- ☒ *Worldwide System Operations Software Competitive Analysis, 2003: Market Revenue and Vendor Shares in 2002* (IDC #29906, August 2003)

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