



# What Makes Cloud Era ITAM Different

A SCALABLE SOFTWARE WHITEPAPER

## Executive Summary

With the explosive growth of SaaS-based computing On-Demand infrastructure, Virtual Server and Desktop solutions as well as industry, government and company specific compliance requirements, today's IT Asset Manager is responsible for managing more complexity in the IT environment than at any time in recent memory. Couple this with vendors becoming even more aggressive in seeking out large settlements for compliance violations based on new devices and licensing rules, and the risk and compliance implications rise exponentially.

The positive news is that advanced IT Asset Management technologies have emerged to keep pace with these changes. They provide levels of automation, governance, integration, reporting and self-service not previously seen. Now, IT organizations and ITAM departments charged with maintaining such complex IT estates can stay ahead of change, rather than be overwhelmed by it.

This cloud era will continue to bring to the enterprise new types of technologies and delivery models to manage, but today's extendable, SaaS-based ITAM solutions provide answers to the challenges that these new technologies present to both IT and lines of business.

## Back to the Future – ITAM in the Client-Server Era

In the 90's and early 2000's, the main purpose of IT Asset Management was arguably the discovery and management of the lifecycle of hardware assets and a relatively low level of software license compliancy focus. Tracing these items was hard because of limited integration, incomplete discovery solutions and the boom and bust cycle of business which caused a lack of emphasis on real ITAM. Formal software license management programs were adopted only by very mature ITAM organizations. However, for most businesses, achieving a high level of software license compliance for true-up purposes was more a goal than reality whilst the main focus was on tracking hardware.

The result was Excel emerging (followed by homegrown SQL and Access DBs) as the dominant ITAM repository; which it continues to be along with the associated chaos it brings.

During this time, because of the higher cost of hardware and software assets, it made sense to have a focused ITAM program to not only track the high value assets but to put in place lifecycle ITAM processes and integrated systems that provided the business with a clear chain-of-custody, and cost, for each asset. However time to deliver a project, the need for multiple discovery tools and complex integrations led projects to lag behind business requirements and lose support.

To address this the largest IT Asset Management software vendors took a suite approach;

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providing products designed to work together and give their customers a one-stop-shop for discovery, IT Asset Management, IT Service Management, Server Management, and overall infrastructure management solutions. In reality most of these solutions were the result of acquiring components, i.e. companies, and development efforts turned into trying to make them work together. The result: vast amounts of time and resource being spent on integration efforts and not on innovation. How well these systems work together is something that is still up for debate with many being targeted for replacement in today's business environment.

## ITAM in the Cloud era – What does it really mean?

Whereas the Client Server generation suffered from complexity and tool inadequacies, IT Asset Management in the cloud era introduces new complexities for the IT Asset Manager not anticipated even 2 to 3 years ago. ITAM in the era of the cloud requires the IT Asset Manager to manage traditional hardware assets (e.g. servers, desktops, laptops) as well as tracking mobile computing devices (e.g. tablets and phones from multiple vendors with multiple operating systems and applications).

Additionally, with the incredible expansion rate of cloud-based computing, the ITAM manager is now responsible for tracking and managing the proliferation of SaaS applications such as Office 365, Google Apps, WorkDay, Salesforce.com and SaaS-based ITSM systems, as well as internally developed cloud-based applications.

Not only is the ITAM Manager responsible for managing the ownership of these diverse asset types, they and their teams are still responsible for tracking and reporting on the costs associated with each of these assets. How can this be done in the face of continuous change?

## A new ITAM era brings new tools for the job

The cloud era presents the ITAM Manager with an ever-expanding mix of technologies, delivery models and license options to manage. On the other hand there are new, powerful technologies to address these challenges. Let's take Microsoft Office 365 for instance. As a SaaS app it is an example of one of the more challenging activities for today's IT Asset Manager.

### Microsoft Office 365

Companies of all sizes are rapidly adopting Microsoft's Office 365 subscription-based productivity suite. While this allows the customer to remove the administrative burden of managing on-premise Microsoft licenses, it does bring with it another challenge, how to ensure that those Office 365 application subscriptions that have been purchased are actually being used by the end user community. What is needed is a solution that thrives on continuous change. It must be able to answer this question by providing customers with accurate adoption and usage information for each user who has been subscribed to Office 365. Equally important is a solution that considers there could be an entirely different licensing model tomorrow!

The key capability required is to provide the forensic discovery capabilities necessary to identify and report on multi-level user interaction with the Office 365 applications. This allows the IT Asset Manager to track and report on each Office 365 application used by the end user community.

This type of critical data can be used to determine end user adoption rates and actual application usage trends. This information can then be used as a basis for renegotiating Office 365 subscription purchases and for optimizing application deployment.

#### Controlling SaaS Sprawl

It is equally important to incorporate discovery technology that provides the capabilities to not only discover the high level SaaS URL that end users log into, but also interaction and usage at the application level. With this usage information, the IT Asset Manager now has the critical data needed to better manage application entitlements and usage of SaaS applications across the enterprise user community.

SaaS-based ITAM solutions that provide forensic discovery of physical, virtual, and SaaS-based assets along with normalization of the discovered product information are necessary to address the continuous changes in technology bombarding the IT organization. By combining this with new and more modern integration tools, the ability to connect with enterprise systems such as procurement, contracts, financial management, Mobile Device Management (MDM), and IT Service Management is more realistic in terms of cost and time. Now, not only can today's IT Asset Manager develop and deploy those consistent, repeatable IT Asset Management processes that manage lifecycle and chain-of-custody for the organization's assets, but they can do so for a lower price per end point.

Combine this with the lack of expensive on-premise infrastructure and systems that accommodate rapid change, clearly supports a new generation of ITAM functionality.

### New and emerging trends in ITAM – Change Continues

#### VDI – Virtual Desktop Infrastructure

VDI has matured into a compelling business case for large organizations that are looking to centralize application management, increase security, and enable better delivery of both applications and the end user computing experience.

VDI has been around for years but recent offerings from VMWare and especially the Citrix StoreFront/XenDesktop solution that is based upon the HP Moonshot System (HP Converged System 100) bring real desktop computing and graphic performance to end users across the enterprise. Enhanced GPU and CPU performance allows the end user community to experience the same (and in some cases higher) levels of performance than they would get from a dedicated PC.

#### VDI and Software License Compliance

However, while VDI is certainly making inroads into the enterprise, the ITAM governance surrounding this technology needs to be addressed not only from a lifecycle, governance and management perspective but also specially around software license compliance.

This VDI environment must still be in compliance with the software vendor's end user license agreement (EULA). Creating even more challenges is the fact that not all vendors provide for running their applications in a virtual environment. It is therefore incumbent on the IT Asset, Contracts and Purchasing Managers, as well as the Desktop and Server Engineering teams to be clear on these EULAs. This means they must review each of the agreements for each application that is to be made available in the VDI environment to ensure that the company is in compliance.

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Furthermore, a stringent lifecycle software license management program needs to be in place to manage, normalize and track the software catalog that is presented in the VDI environment.

## Summary

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The good news is that new IT Asset Management technologies have emerged to keep pace with these changes. They provide levels of automation, governance, integration, reporting and self-service not previously seen. Now IT organizations and ITAM departments charged with maintaining such complex IT estates can stay ahead of change, rather than be overwhelmed by it.

The cloud era will continue to bring to the enterprise new types of technologies and delivery models to manage, but today's extendable, SaaS-based ITAM solutions provide solutions to the challenges that these new technologies present to the business. After all, you can't manage what you can't measure!

Learn more about Scalable's Asset Vision at [www.scalable.com](http://www.scalable.com), or email us to request a demonstration at [sales@scalable.com](mailto:sales@scalable.com).

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