

Add value to Intune with an IT Asset Management toolset



Many IT departments use some form of a systems management tool such as Microsoft Endpoint Management and Intune but too many rely on their systems management software to perform IT asset management functions.

Systems management tools do the things they are designed for very well but are not a substitute for a comprehensive ITAM or Software Asset Management (SAM) solution. By using flexible ITAM and SAM tools that easily integrate external data and have a dynamic report writer, IT pros can extract real value from their SCCM investment.

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Systems management tools are defined as solutions that manage enterprise-wide administration of distributed systems, including computer systems. Systems management is strongly influenced by network management. Maximum productivity can be achieved more efficiently through event correlation, system automation, and predictive analysis. It includes remote control, patch management, software distribution, operating system deployment, network access protection, and hardware and software inventory. Note the lack of any ITAM capabilities.

Systems management tools play a key role in maintaining the overall IT infrastructure. As part of that function, systems management tools must be able to discover and identify devices on the network and have some “awareness” of the software already installed. Many have reporting capabilities built in, which lead some IT managers to rely on the systems management tool for hardware and software discovery and inventory. Therein lies the problem.

Key benefits of integrating the two solutions:

- Get complete visibility of the entire network
- Automatically infer locations from IP addresses and other custom rules
- Pull data from multiple sources including Intune, JAMF, JIRA, Azure and SCCM to provide a “single pane of glass” visibility of your inventory
- Software License compliance reporting
- Analysis of hardware capabilities and readiness for upgrades
- Assess security risks
- Assess inter-asset relationships and dependencies
- Financial reporting

Unlike ITAM systems, systems management tools are not designed to collect, or report detailed system information. After all, their main purpose is to get software out to the endpoints and provide some level of network protection; however, they are not designed to thoroughly interrogate those endpoint devices, or to provide the data classification, recognition and reporting services needed to properly make strategic decisions.

Indeed, the current release of Microsoft Endpoint Management does not inventory the entire installed software base or hard disk for executables – only “managed” applications are monitored. This leaves the asset inventory lacking in key information needed to make business decisions.

One of the most widely used systems management tools utilizes deployed agents to collect configuration information. According to the publisher’s website, the software collects hardware and software inventory by enabling the client agents on a site-by-site basis. The hardware inventory agent collects available disk space, processor type and operating system for each computer. The software agent, in turn, identifies inventoried file types and versions and collects specified files. The Inventory client agents then can be used to create an inventory report based on the client inventory information collected. The resulting reports are perfectly suited for administering software on the network, but not detailed enough for use in an ITAM practice.

ITAM is defined as “The set of business practices that join financial, contractual and inventory functions to support life cycle management and strategic decision making for the IT environment. Assets include all elements of software and hardware that are found in the business environment. ITAM includes gathering detailed hardware and software inventory, and ITAM practices minimize the risks and related costs of advancing IT portfolio infrastructure projects based on old, incomplete and/or less accurate information.

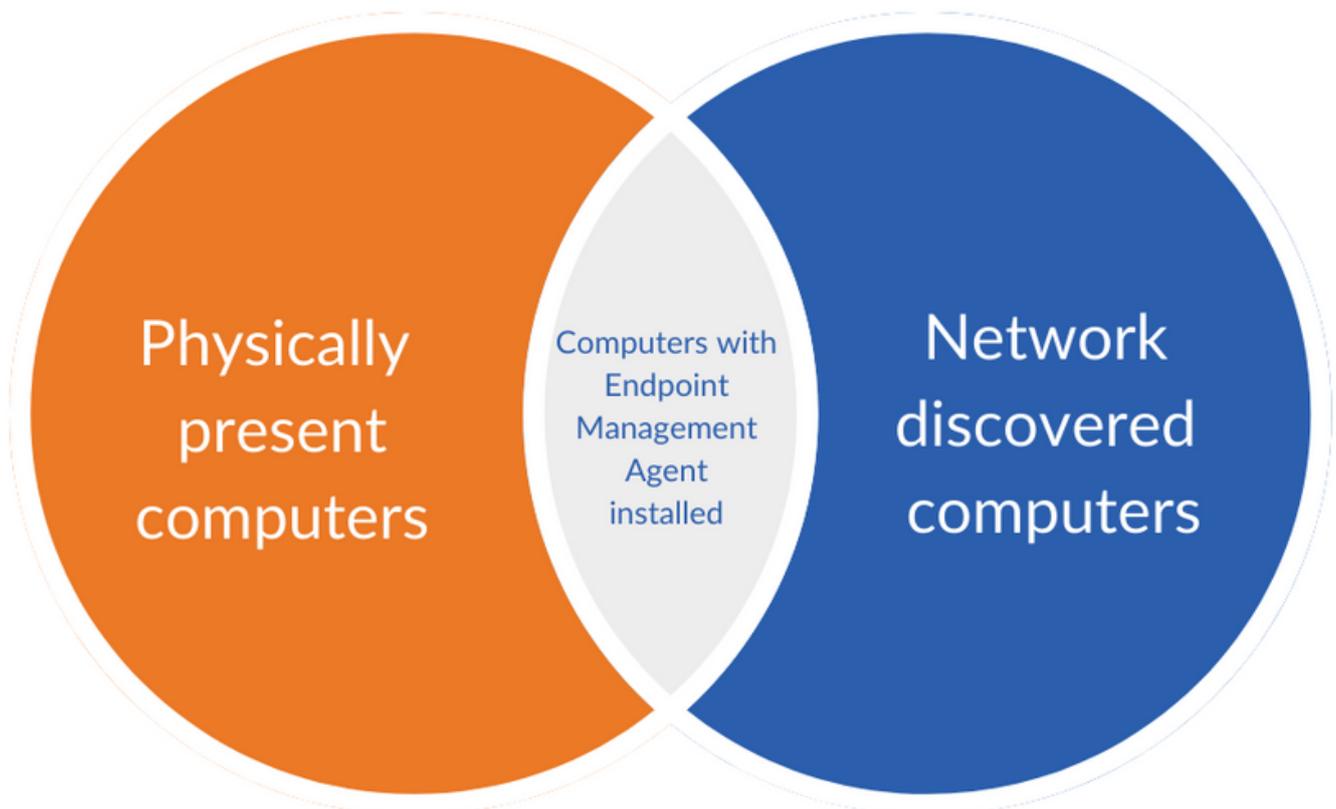
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There is a world of difference between the information generated by a solution that is primarily designed to deploy software across a network and one that is intended to “join financial, contractual and inventory functions to support life cycle management and strategic decision making for the IT environment.” ITAM solutions do not manage systems well and systems management tools do not perform ITAM tasks well. However, combined, they make a superb team.

Using two solutions raises the question about data consistence and integrity. Management needs to have one, reliable, accurate source of information regarding the IT infrastructure. If hardware devices, including network management devices such as switches and routers are omitted, decisions regarding upgrades, and disposals are impacted. If software licenses and installations are missed, software license compliance is impacted. Manual reconciliations of two systems are difficult, time consuming, and prone to errors.

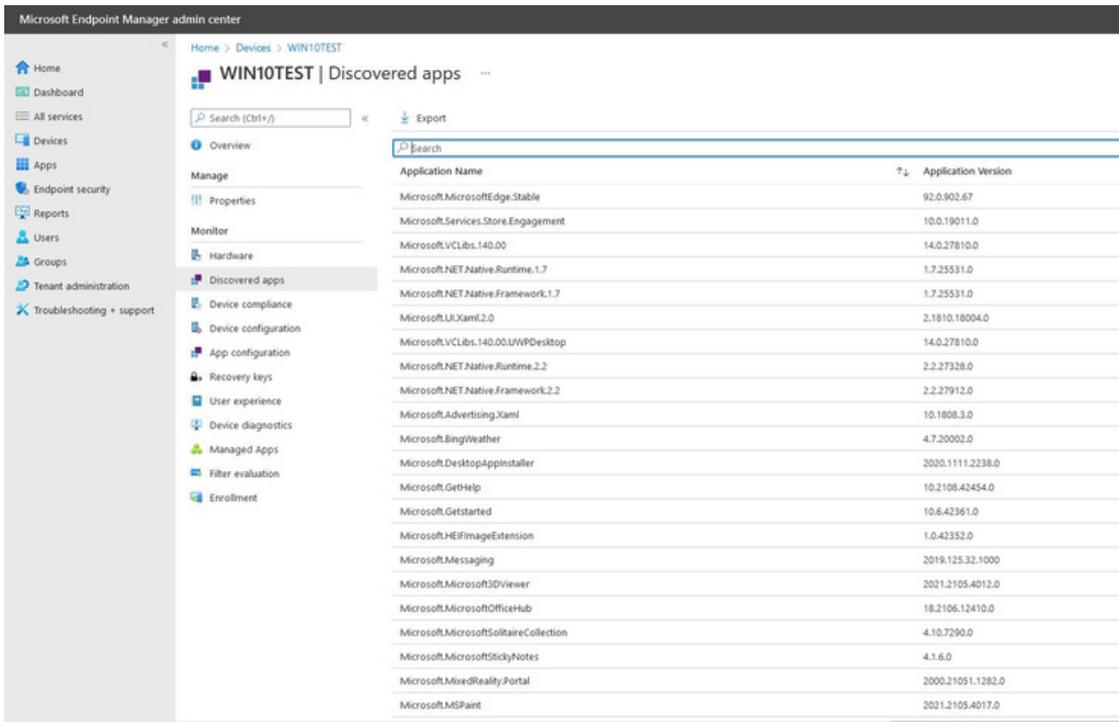
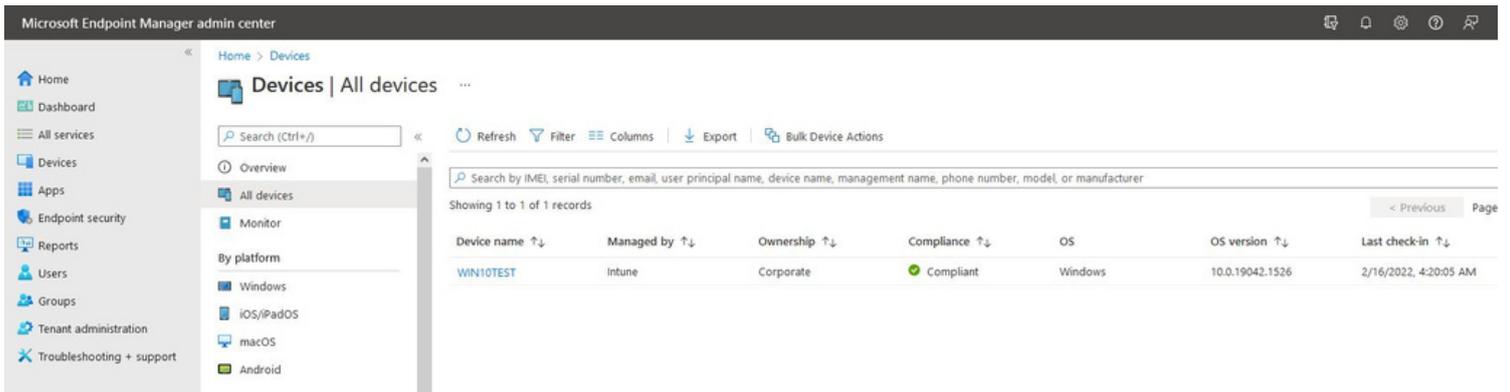
However, this needs not be a concern. A competent ITAM solution will utilize the data collected by the systems management tools and combine it with the discovery and inventory data, eliminating duplicates and providing a complete detailed inventory of the network. Moreover, an agentless ITAM solution will scan every device detected and will report those devices without an agent, or in which the agent has been removed or is corrupted. Where a systems management tool solution may report the make, model and quantity of the discovered devices, the ITAM solution will report the discovery date, asset type, serial number, description, asset number (bar code), OS version, disk space and type of each disk, processor type, physical location and username.

The following Venn diagram illustrates the real benefit of using an ITAM solution in conjunction with a systems management tool.



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The same applies to software. Consider the following reports generated by Intune:



It displays the computer name, manager, ownership, compliance and OS details, and the software list for that device shows the technical key of the application name (such as Microsoft.BingWeather). It's good enough to list the managed apps on the system, but wholly inadequate for an audit or for a licensing analysis.

Now consider the level of detail generated by an ITAM solution that has imported software information from the systems management tool.

The screenshot shows the xassets IT Asset Management interface. The main content area displays a 'Software License Management - Licensable Only' report. The report includes a table with columns for Software manufacturer, ID, Manufacturer, Software Product, Licenseable, Licensing Model, Installed, Rights Required, Licenses, Seats, Total Rights, Priority Allocation, Rights Allocated, Allocated from Downgrade, Allocated as Downgrade, Outstanding Requirement, and Unused Rights. The table lists various Microsoft Office products and their licensing details.

Software manufacturer	ID	Manufacturer	Software Product	Licenseable	Licensing Model	Installed	Rights Required	Licenses	Seats	Total Rights	Priority Allocation	Rights Allocated	Allocated from Downgrade	Allocated as Downgrade	Outstanding Requirement	Unused Rights
Microsoft	1005	Microsoft	Office PowerPoint 2007	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	5										
Microsoft	1122	Microsoft	Office PowerPoint 2010	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	51	5								5	
Microsoft	1184	Microsoft	Office PowerPoint 2013	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	96										
Microsoft	1207	Microsoft	Office PowerPoint 2016	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	56	1								1	
Microsoft	1208	Microsoft	Office PowerPoint MLUI 2016	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	44	44								44	
Microsoft	1052	Microsoft	Office Professional 2003	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	26	26	13	51	35		26	6			15
Microsoft	1006	Microsoft	Office Professional 2007	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	2	2					2	2			
Microsoft	1007	Microsoft	Office Professional Plus 2007	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	3	3	12	26	18		3		9		6
Microsoft	1123	Microsoft	Office Professional Plus 2010	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	46	42								42	
Microsoft	1165	Microsoft	Office Professional Plus 2013	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	90	96	6	9	9		9			87	
Microsoft	1209	Microsoft	Office Professional Plus 2016	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	34	34	5	21	21		21			13	
Microsoft	1008	Microsoft	Office Project Professional 2007	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	1	1	7	7						1	
Microsoft	1125	Microsoft	Office Project Professional 2010	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	12	12					12	12			
Microsoft	1211	Microsoft	Office Project Professional 2016	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	1	1	2	13	13		1		12		
Microsoft	1126	Microsoft	Office Project 2010	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	3	3								3	
Microsoft	1053	Microsoft	Office Publisher 2003	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	6										
Microsoft	1089	Microsoft	Office Publisher 2007	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	5										
Microsoft	1166	Microsoft	Office Publisher 2013	Licensable	Per Computer or Server	96										

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The inventory, plus all the relevant licensing information, is displayed in a format that can be used by IT managers to identify problems and make decisions regarding software acquisitions.

The benefits of utilizing both a systems management tool and an IT asset management tool are numerous. Beyond generating actionable information about the entire IT infrastructure, a complete ITAM solution can be used to discover and report on devices with faulty or no agent. It scans every device, even those which may not support an agent. Software titles are normalized, creating accurate information crucial in performing license reconciliation. Moreover, the ITAM solution is designed to create a wide range of standard and customized reports that provide in-depth information to management. The ITAM system will also perform lifecycle analysis, identifying obsolete and disposed devices.



xAssets IT Asset Management toolset natively includes Microsoft Endpoint Management (Intune) integration to extract computer records. It also natively supports Azure AD integration for Single Sign On and for extracting user information, and JAMF for extracting detailed information on mobile devices. The combined solution provides a single pane of glass to your entire IT asset inventory.

About xAssets

xAssets is a privately-owned global company with US offices located in Wilmington, DE who provide sales, administrative and technical support along with ongoing product development efforts. They are focused on developing flexible, affordable and easy to deploy IT asset management and fixed asset solutions. A fast-growing company, xAssets has major corporate and government customers worldwide.

xAssets is also a certified SIIA Certified Audit Software Provider and is a member of the CASP program as well as a provider member of the International Association of IT Asset managers (IAITAM).

xAssets products includes IT Asset Management Software, Fixed Asset Management Software, Financial Asset Management, Software Asset Management, Enterprise Asset Management, Service Management and Network Discovery Software, offering cloud-based (SaaS) or locally installed versions for small to large enterprises. The solutions are used by many well-known organizations around the world in almost every vertical market. Their partners range from MS LARs to global IT Service companies to small niche product providers.

The company provides proactive consultative support to customers throughout the product lifecycle and they always ensure that their customers' requirements are met or exceeded. These products provide full life cycle asset management capabilities, including discovery capabilities that can stand alone, or complement and integrate with SCCM (System Center Configuration Manager), and provides users with a full Configuration Management Database (CMDB).

For more information about xAssets' ITAM and FAM products, its other ground-breaking products or how to become an integration partner go to www.xassets.com or contact Barry Long, Director of Business development, on 800 691 9120.

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The logo for xassets, featuring the word 'xassets' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The 'x' is orange, and the remaining letters are grey.