



118 118 calls on Centennial Discovery to provide a directory of software assets.



BUSINESS DRIVER

Rapid increase of software and hardware throughout the organization
FAST Gold accreditation

INDUSTRY SECTOR

Telecommunications

NETWORK TYPE

Decentralised, deployed over three locations

WHY DISCOVERY

Helped to manage the threat of virus, malware and unwanted file downloads
Accurate and detailed reporting

BUSINESS BENEFITS

Reduced risk of software non-compliance
Helped to enforce Acceptable Use Policy
Tightened purchasing control reducing costly IT spend

Fast growth and a need to carefully control both IT costs and risks led the UK's largest directory assistance provider, The Number 118 118 to call on Centennial Discovery to provide a complete inventory of all IT assets.

Introduction

The Number 118 118 became an instant household name in 2003 when the sight of twin moustachioed marathon runners first hit TV screens. A couple of years later and The Number (backed by InfoNXX Inc. in the USA) is now the UK's largest directory assistance provider.

But keeping up with the growth and demand for IT hardware and software has presented a new set of challenges to The Number's IT department. Particularly aware that they had significantly increased software use in a short space of time, in 2004 the IT department made a conscious decision to take charge of software licensing and achieve Federation Against Software Theft (FAST) Gold accreditation. But to do this, The Number needed to know exactly how much software was on the network at any given time.

Business challenge

In September 2004, The Number was using a software management system and Excel to audit and record the software installed and running on employees' computers. "With the amount of computers we had, the process would take three days to complete and be out of date by the time we had finished," said Lee Delahay, senior systems administrator at The Number UK Ltd.

It quickly became clear that a new asset tracking system was needed that would not only provide quicker access to information about the software being used, but would also update the records without additional manual effort.

At the same time, The Number was becoming increasingly concerned about the number of software applications and files being downloaded onto the network and wanted to put a solution in place that would help IT administrators combat the threats of viruses, malware and unwanted files.

Any new system had to ensure that The Number could audit the software in use at any time and allow the IT department to ensure that the correct licensing was in place. This requirement was key to The Number's desire to obtain Gold accreditation from FAST.

Solution

Following the successful conclusion of the pilot scheme, independent asset management specialist SoftAsset, worked with the IT department to roll out Centennial Discovery across the three UK offices.

A phased roll-out, department by department, was carried out to ensure any new data was captured during the deployment process.



“Discovery helps us enforce our acceptable use and security policies by helping administrators pinpoint the existing of inappropriate files on the network”.

“We used Discovery to provide us with accurate reports on the software installed on individual PCs and then compared this information to the licensing records we had on file,” said Delahay, “Using Centennial Discovery alongside Software Organiser, we were able to quickly identify where we had software licensing shortfalls or overages.”

While Discovery was providing the required software identification, it also became clear that the solution was capable of delivering detailed reports on all aspects of the IT estate, not least the individual files sitting on individual PCs.

SoftAsset helped The Number configure Discovery to create automatic alerts to the IT department whenever a new application is installed, or when users download specific file types (such as MP3 tracks) to their computers. This helps the IT department both maintain software licensing compliance and monitor PC usage.

Business benefits

The Number’s initial requirements were straightforward – reduce the financial threat of fines by identifying and reconciling the number of software applications in use against the number of licenses held. With that achieved, Discovery is now helping the company reduce overheads by ensuring that it does not over-spend on unnecessary software purchases.

Discovery from Centennial has proved itself not only valuable to the IT team in working towards the demands of FAST’s Gold accreditation criteria but is now helping the HR department to monitor the use of company PCs by individual employees.

“Discovery helps us enforce our acceptable use and security policies by helping administrators pinpoint the existing of inappropriate files on the network,” said Delahay. “Because Discovery highlights the exact PC, user and even location, we can now talk directly to the individual involved to make sure that no rogue files are downloaded and installed in the future.”

The introduction of Discovery has even changed the internal software ordering process at 118 118. Instantaneous insight has meant that a request for a new application can be dealt with immediately and approved by IT in a matter of minutes.

For example, thanks to Discovery’s ability to track software usage, Delahay and his colleagues can spot where existing software isn’t being used and so can be redeployed rather than spending money on new applications.

According to Delahay: “With Discovery now tracking thousands of software applications across hundreds of individual PCs, the risk of spending too much money on excessive licences or having too many installed copies of applications that are not covered by valid licences has been removed.”

Looking ahead

In addition to software auditing, The Number also now plans to use Discovery to provide the same visibility of its hardware assets, making a complete system view possible at any time.

“With the software inventory we need for FAST gold accreditation now in place, we’re looking for new ways to save money with Discovery,” added Delahay. “As we continue to grow, I’m sure the solution will help us keep a tight control on IT services and spending.”