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Discovery Case Study

BENTALL MAKES GOOD CAPITAL FROM IT
ASSETS WITH CENTENNIAL DISCOVERY®
INVENTORY MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

Overview

Bentall Capital Limited Partnership is a fully integrated real estate services organization with industry-leading expertise in investment management, property services, development and merchant banking. With over 1,000 employees and offices in Seattle, Los Angeles, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto and Ottawa, the company is responsible for management of \$6 billion of real estate assets owned by major institutional investors in Canada and the United States.



The Need

With over 50 property management offices throughout the US and Canada and a head office in Vancouver, British Columbia, Bentall Capital's methods of assessing its IT inventory needs were manual and resource intensive. It has a wide range of IT systems - an inheritance from the company's rapid growth and take over of three separate businesses.

To monitor and keep up-to-date with its IT needs, Bentall Capital has IT support staff in each of its regional offices. Even with this support staff, the company had no realtime view of its IT infrastructure and inventory. For instance, when it audited its hardware and software, members of the IT team in each region had to visit all the separate offices, manually record the IT inventory and then send an Excel spreadsheet back to the Vancouver head office. By the time this information was centralized and consolidated, it was immediately out-of-date.

Bentall Capital's central IT function also wanted to charge each business unit for its technology needs. To do this the company would need an accurate inventory of PCs and the location of each PC. An accurate IT inventory would enable them to build a strategic view of their immediate and longterm IT requirements.

Licensing is a crucial issue for the company. The take over of three companies inside three years had exacerbated the situation. "We wanted to know the number of licenses we had, what was critical and what wasn't. This was no easy task as we didn't know how many PCs we had, where they were located and what was running on them," comments George Young, IT Project Manager, Bentall Capital.

The company wanted to upgrade many of its old Pentium 133 PCs. Therefore, it needed an effective inventory management solution to support its auditing requirements and to provide a strategic upgrade path for its IT infrastructure.



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The Solution

In early 2002, Bentall Capital conducted a wide ranging, intensive evaluation of key inventory management products on the market. An initial list of 25 to 30 products was soon reduced to six or seven products.

Solutions ranged from high-end, fully featured suites to specialist inventory management systems. Following their evaluation, it quickly became apparent that the Centennial Discovery solution was the best option.

"Centennial Discovery stood head and shoulders above its rivals. Its intuitive, Windows-friendly environment was particularly impressive. Its interface and simple drag and drop functionality means that the tool is uncomplicated to use but is also extremely powerful. It was Centennial Discovery's web interface that really clinched it for us. As a geographically dispersed organization, it is imperative that we can have regional access to our central asset database. The web interface provides this access from anywhere in the world." comments George Young.

"We assessed some feature-rich and expensive solutions, but they couldn't touch Centennial Discovery for its combination of feature-rich and easy-to-use functionality," adds Young.

The Benefits

Centennial Discovery soon proved its worth to Bentall Capital after it was rolled out across the enterprise. The company estimated that it needed to attend to 500 computers and approximately seventy servers. Centennial Discovery soon proved that this figure was inaccurate. The initial inventory report concluded there were 700 machines that needed attention, scattered across 50 offices.

"The benefits of using an advanced inventory management solution like Centennial Discovery, soon became apparent. It saved the IT department weeks of work. We no longer have to tour our offices, manually assessing how many PCs need replacing. The Centennial Discovery database produced an immediate 'snapshot' breakdown in real-time, illustrating clearly the contents of our IT inventory, what software runs on each PC as well as its user and location. The ability to then transfer this into an Excel spreadsheet is a real bonus. It means we can include this inventory data in a variety of different analytical processes." states George Young.

The audit of the company's out-of-date Pentium 133 PCs showed that a fifth of its machines needed replacing. This was more than initially thought, but, in the longer term, will save the company money. Centennial Discovery provides a calibrated, uniform approach to IT across Bentall Capital. The company's IT function now tracks all software and hardware. It now has information that indicates whether nonstandard software or PCs are used and if employees are using memory intensive applications. Conversely, redundant or little used items of software can also be tracked down. This ability led to the revelation that many programs are not used for four or five months at a time.

"From a corporate point of view, Centennial Discovery enables us to achieve a corporate IT standard that is uniform across the whole company. People are no longer able to risk the security of our infrastructure by running non-standard programs because Centennial Discovery immediately reports these instances to us. Considering Centennial Discovery as a platform that can take the whole IT strategy of the company forward, I would say that its impact is huge," adds Young.

The complications presented by legal compliance have also been simplified greatly. Traditionally, many of the PCs weren't upgraded very often. With Bentall Capital's recent takeovers, this picture has grown more complex because of the number of different hardware and software platforms inherited. Centennial Discovery enables the company to make a great leap forward and develop a consolidated view of the investment needed to modernize its software applications. Again, the initial outlay is compensated by its ability to modernize in a single step. For the company's remote IT staff, Centennial Discovery's remote web-based interface means they now have access to a complete up-to-date breakdown of all applications run on a particular machine. This is invaluable and time-saving for all technical staff.

George and his team also like Centennial Discovery's Upgrade Costing Wizard so they can determine the cost of upgrading to the latest Microsoft platforms quickly and easily.

The Future

The next step for the company's adoption of Centennial Discovery will be closer integration with the company's helpdesk system. This will enable the help desk team to resolve technical issues by utilizing Centennial Discovery's advanced asset and inventory management features. The scalability of the Centennial Discovery solution means that this next step can be achieved with minimal disruption to existing systems.



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