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Discovery Case Study

HOBSONS BAY CITY COUNCIL AUTOMATES
ASSET MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY
AUDITS WITH CENTENNIAL DISCOVERY®

- **Business Driver:**
IT asset management, capacity planning, ITIL
- **Industry Sector:**
Public sector, local government
- **Network type:**
400 seats, 30 sites
- **Why Centennial Discovery:**
Ease of use, web-enabled interface
- **Business benefits:**
Reduced administrative overhead, cost-effective IT management

Overview

With over 400 PCs and 35 Windows servers spread across 30 sites, Hobsons Bay City Council in Australia faces a common challenge for many public sector organizations; how to manage widely-dispersed critical IT assets.

Using Centennial Discovery to audit and manage its IT assets, the Council has developed a clear and accurate view of its technology infrastructure, increased operational efficiency and made life easier for management and technical support staff.

The Challenge

With its IT infrastructure spread across 30 locations, keeping track of technology assets was never going to be an easy task for Hobsons Bay City Council.

"Under the banner of good governance, it is essential that the Council looks after its assets," said Michael Govan, Manager, Information Services, Hobsons Bay City Council. "This involves making sure that we know what those assets are and where they are located."

In the past, the Council used two databases to keep track of its IT assets. One was an asset management database in Lotus Notes, which was tied to the service management system. However, all asset records had to be entered into the system and updated manually. These records then fed the corporate database, emerging as high-level data with no detail.

"We relied on people to follow set processes every time," said Govan. "No-one's perfect, so the system was always

a little bit hit and miss. We were probably only achieving 80-90% accuracy."

The Council needed to bypass these manual processes in order to increase operational efficiency. This was especially apparent in the Council's asset management and audit systems. Budget time was looming and an accurate inventory of all the Council's IT assets had to be prepared. Rather than face yet another time-consuming and costly manual audit, the Council decided to investigate asset management software.

The Solution

Centennial Software partner Frontline Systems presented Discovery to the Council. All it needed was one demonstration and Michael Govan was convinced that it was the perfect solution to the Council's needs.

Govan was impressed by the fact that Centennial Discovery was a mature and well-tested product. It was available in the United Kingdom for five years prior to its availability in Australia.

Centennial Discovery is a network inventory product that enables organizations to make informed decisions about IT and network planning. By automatically building a complete view of all hardware, network devices and software, Centennial Discovery simplifies asset management, auditing and license compliance, giving increased control of IT assets and infrastructure.

Centennial Discovery's ease of use and its browser-based front end were key selling points for an organization with so many remote users. The ability for technical support staff to access the details of remote PCs from a central location rather than making a trip to the actual site was an enormous time saver.

Cost was also an important factor in the Council's decision. Which is why the quoted total price of A\$18,000, including the first year's maintenance and support and three day's technical support went down well with Govan.

"I thought, '\$18,000 a year, that's not bad'," he said. "Then Centennial Software explained that this figure wasn't for a year, but was a one-off payment. To install something that manages 400 PCs across 30 sites for such a low cost is just incredible."

The Council signed up the next day and began to roll out the system to its remote sites.

This fast implementation meant that Centennial Discovery was well established by the time budget planning began in February 2004. That allowed technical staff to develop a comprehensive capacity plan that could be used throughout the year.

Auditing with Ease

Once Centennial Discovery was deployed, the benefits were immediately noticeable, according to Govan. "We're now more real-time in our management processes and are certainly more efficient in the way we're able

to manage our IT assets, both in terms of planning and implementation.

"Audits are also far simpler with Centennial Discovery. It has really streamlined the whole process, which was always previously a massive overhead from a resources point of view."

Rather than technicians needing to physically visit each of the Council's servers and 400 PCs – an expensive and laborious process – they can now access that information from one central location.

"The software has also negated the audit latency effect," Govan said. "When auditing manually, one of the problems is having the technology change behind you, meaning that you have to keep a secondary record of what's changed since you started the audit. With Centennial Discovery, we're able to generate a snapshot of every technology asset overnight, so our information is never out of date."

The functionality of the Centennial Discovery software allows technical staff to solve problems and organize upgrades much faster than was previously possible.

"If we need to carry out upgrades, we can see instantly which PCs or servers need extra disk space," said Govan. "And if problems on the network do arise, technical staff can push an audit through straight away. Finding the problem faster means solving the problem faster."

Unexpected Benefits

Centennial Discovery has also helped the Council in ways it had not anticipated, such as keeping track of software licenses. Technical staff are now able to see exactly where the Council is under or over-licensed.

"We can track who uses what software and how frequently," Govan explained. "We're about to install a Citrix remote access

solution on the network. Centennial Discovery has allowed us to make an informed decision about what level of concurrent licensing we'll need based on current staff usage."

The Centennial Discovery installation has also enhanced the Council's capacity management. When staff need the latest information on the Council's IT assets, they can find it in minutes, not days.

"Just the other week we had a project meeting where some questions regarding our server capacity were raised," said Govan. "So I went into Centennial Discovery, drilled down, found the information, exported it and created a spreadsheet in just three minutes."

Planning for the Future

The implementation of Centennial Discovery laid the groundwork for the Council to implement its Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework. The software ensures that any minor changes made to the system go through a structured assessment process and are recorded in the configuration management database. This enables better tracking of patterns and problems and allow greater insight into the Council's IT asset management framework.

One of the most important factors for the Council is the way that Centennial Discovery has facilitated a level of planning that was previously unattainable.

"We're now able to look at a real picture of our IT assets and determine what needs to be upgraded, purchased, changed or overhauled in the next twelve months," Govan said. "There's no need to use guesswork anymore. We can now determine what we need to do using accurate and up-to-date information."

network discovery & management

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