



*'The purpose of this document is to identify whether the functionality of Microsoft SCCM is sufficient to meet an organisation's requirements or whether the increased functionality of an IT asset management tool, such as Symantec Altiris, is more appropriate.'*

# SYMANTEC ALTIRIS v MICROSOFT SYSTEM CENTER CONFIGURATION MANAGER (SCCM)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Choosing the appropriate tools for an IT and Software Asset Management (IT & SAM) project is fundamental to the success of the IT & SAM programme. The tools' requirements should not be considered in isolation, but in conjunction with the overall requirement for management tools within IT and procurement. This will ensure that all IT & SAM processes are fully integrated with all the IT and financial management tools and all aspects of IT & SAM will have been implemented and adopted effectively.

An asset inventory tool is the essential foundation tool for any IT & SAM programme, recording all asset information associated to a physical device, including the nett book value, leasing contract, depreciation value and physical peripherals

such as printers and monitors. In addition, it invokes a set of business practices that join financial, contractual and inventory functions together to support lifecycle management and strategic decision making for the IT environment.

Most asset inventory tools, however, have been designed and implemented to assist in the management of an organisation's technical responsibilities. Some publishers (i.e. Symantec Altiris, IBM Tivoli, HP AssetCenter and LANDesk) have provided additional modules that enable organisations to manage the full lifecycle of their IT assets - from acquisition to retirement.

Most universities and colleges have subscribed to the Microsoft CHEST Campus Agreement which incorporates the rights to

use Microsoft System Centre Configuration Manager (SCCM). This application provides the basic functionality which is required to satisfy the fundamentals of an IT & SAM programme, however it does have some limitations, especially when it comes to supporting heterogeneous environments (i.e. non-x86 and Linux).

This white paper provides a functional comparison between Microsoft SCCM and Symantec Altiris, a product suite that has now become one of the leading IT asset management tools on today's market. The purpose of this document is to identify whether the functionality of Microsoft SCCM is sufficient to meet an organisation's requirements or whether the increased functionality of an IT asset management tool, such as Symantec Altiris, is more appropriate.



## COMPARISON

### Discovery, Inventory and Asset Management

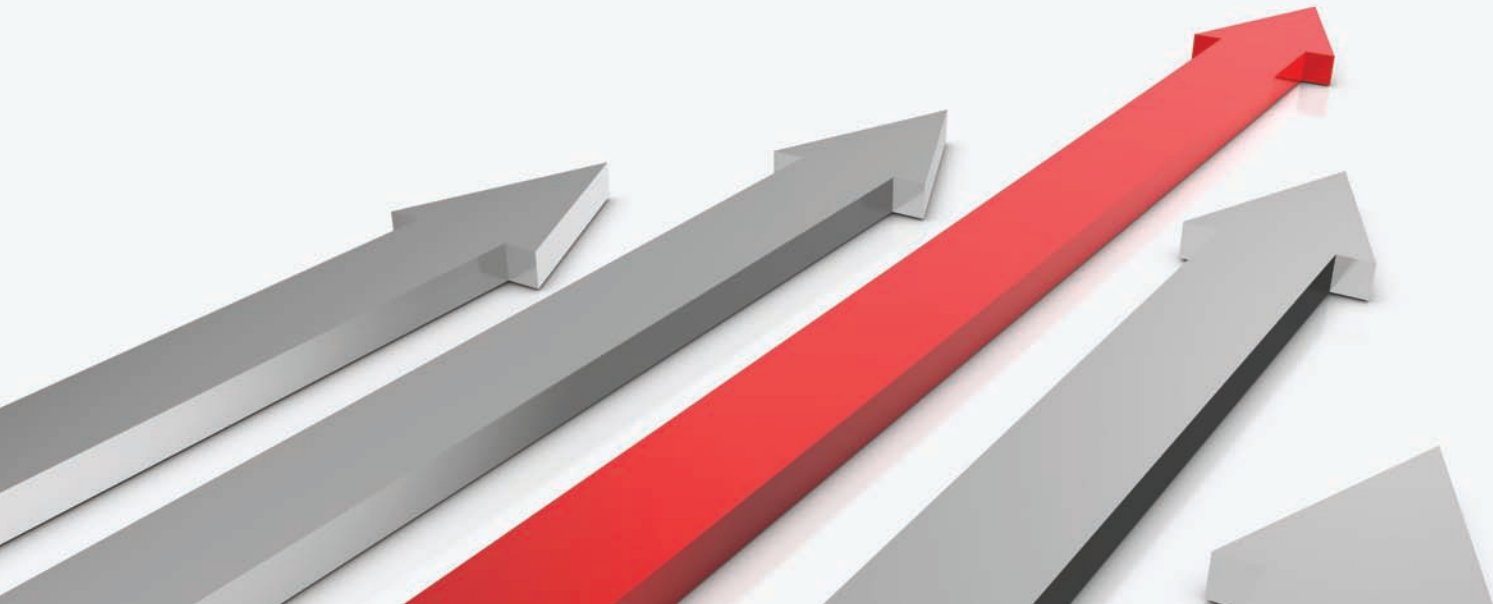
This is a core competency for both solutions. Microsoft SCCM is unable to discover non-x86 (switches, routers, Mac, handhelds, etc) and Linux systems natively, but Altiris has many capabilities in this area, including OS and application discovery, and discovery of bare metal devices (by serial number, MAC address, etc).

KEY FEATURES	ALTIRIS	MICROSOFT SCCM
Bare Metal Discovery (x86)	✓	✓
Windows OS Discovery	✓	✓
Non-x86 System Discovery	✓	x
Linux OS Discovery	✓	x
Application Discovery	✓	✓

### Bare-Metal Provisioning

Altiris can remotely provision both Windows and Linux without an agent, onto bare metal. (Bare-metal provisioning is a technique in the field of data recovery and restoration where the backed up data is available in a form which allows one to restore a computer system from 'bare metal' - i.e. without any requirements as to previously installed software or operating system). Microsoft SCCM can only provision Windows and does not support Linux, Mac or UNIX.

KEY FEATURES	ALTIRIS	MICROSOFT SCCM
Windows Provisioning	✓	✓
Linux Provisioning	✓	x
Mac OS Provisioning	✓	x
Virtual Machine Provisioning	✓	x
UNIX Provisioning	✓	x



### Software & Patch Distribution

Both solutions are built for core software distribution and patch management on Windows systems, even for third-party and in-house applications. Microsoft SCCM cannot, however, support non-Windows clients at all. Altiris is the only vendor to support Windows, Mac, Linux and UNIX.

KEY FEATURES	ALTIRIS	MICROSOFT SCCM
Windows Clients (Desktop and Server)	✓	✓
Linux Clients (Desktop and Server)	✓	x
Apple Mac OS/X Clients	✓	x
UNIX (HP/UX, Solaris, AIX) Clients	✓	x
OEM and Custom Application Support	✓	✓

### Process Automation and Service Desk

Organisations should look for solutions that support multi-stage workflows, wizard-based scripting, 'learning' abilities and graphical definitions to make routine tasks faster, easier and more accurate. Both solutions provide some process automation, but Altiris has a built-in end-to-end service desk automation and Workflow Designer.

KEY FEATURES	ALTIRIS	MICROSOFT SCCM
Includes Process Automation or Orchestration Capabilities	✓	✓
Wizard-based Scripting	✓	x
Workflow Connects Directly with Integrated Service Desk	o	x
Workflow Connects Directly with Third-party Service Desk	✓	o
Integrated Service Ticket Creation and Tracking	✓	x

### Interfaces and Reporting

Administration and reporting from a Web console is common. Role-based administration controls which are important to maintain security and functional isolation, however, are not common to all solutions. Only Microsoft SCCM does not provide real-time alerting to ensure prompt response to potential problems.

KEY FEATURES	ALTIRIS	MICROSOFT SCCM
Web Browser-based Administration GUI	✓	✓
Role-based Administration with Pre-defined Roles	✓	x
Pre-defined and Customisable Web-based Reports	✓	✓
Data Export for OEM Reporting	✓	✓
Real-time Alerting	✓	x

## FIND OUT MORE

For further information on the Software Asset Management services we offer, contact the Licence Dashboard Team on **0845 265 1217** or email [info@licencedashboard.co.uk](mailto:info@licencedashboard.co.uk)

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