



ManageSoft

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Software evaluated: **Enterprise Compliance Manager** Version: 8
(see technical evaluation report for installation requirements and details of evaluation criteria)

Summary

The ManageSoft suite of products is clearly aimed at larger organisations, multi-site and can easily accommodate tens of thousands of devices (desktops, laptops, servers) and can manage thousands of software applications, vendors and contracts. It encompasses an extremely coherent and somewhat complex but very well integrated system that allows very detailed software management and asset control. From simple asset inventory through to complete end to end life cycle management for all of your software components, whether commercial, shareware or free, the solution caters for it. ECM and its sister products (Enterprise Deployment Suite) are clearly at an advanced stage of development. Significantly, the product can detect and manage very complex Oracle database installations, and there has been a lot of development work and investment in this area. Given that Oracle has hundreds of applications across multiple platforms this will be seen as a key differentiator for large corporations that have Oracle at the core of their strategy. If an organisation needs a complete asset management solution then ManageSoft appear to be in a very strong position. Their suite is intelligently designed and has just about every functionality required providing a comprehensive solution. From precise Oracle software management control, Virtual Machine licence management (and the specific licensing requirements of this type of machine) to complete software maintenance tracking and reporting the product is extremely detailed and offers a truly complete solution.





Installation Narration

Managesoft Enterprise Compliance Manager (ECM) provides an Inventory and Discovery module. The installation launcher allows you to install all 3 components of the inventory module - Administration server, Distribution server, and Inventory Agent. For the review, the software was installed in this order. The Administration server guides the user through a set of installation questions. The defaults were selected for the review. The ECM software needs MS SQL 2005 or 2008 installed on either the machine itself or another machine that is available for the software to utilise for its backend database functionality. A full copy of MS SQL 2005 was installed on the review machine. The installer is clear and simple to understand. The Compliance Manager installation is a separate installation, again a simple wizard based install.

Running the Program

The ManageSoft suite of products is clearly aimed at larger corporations, although, through Managed Service Provider partnerships, a hosted ECM solution is targeted at mid-sized companies. It comprises of a very thorough software and hardware asset management console coupled with very detailed reporting system. When first running the ECM console you are presented with a typical MMC based interface (MMC is the UI that Microsoft supplies with all of its server OS's). The navigation pane on the left consists of a number of high level functions including Enterprise Groups and Enterprise Compliance Manager with several nested functions underneath. It's easy to navigate but will take some time to understand how all the pieces fit together. It's easy to see why ManageSoft recommend professional services installation to ensure that customers setup the system effectively.

Setting up the System

After the initial installation you are presented with two key applications. The ECM (Enterprise Compliance Manager) console and the web based reporting tool. The ECM console is where most of the action takes place and the day to day management activities are driven from this tool. The options here are extensive though and again this errs towards a sound training plan and implementation schedule. The system can be configured to completely map out your organisations structure and it would make sense to plan out the design very carefully. It can allow for multiple sites, departments, cost centres and so on. This is where the professional services kick in. Intelligent system design is essential and properly done allows for the tool to really take over the day to day management of the organisations asset control processes.



Ongoing Administration

Clearly it is going to take some time to setup this system, however available connectors allow the importing of data from many other systems, including inventory and financial tools. Once it has been setup then it's just a case of using the many varied features and functions encompassed within ECM to manage the day to day activities. The system UI is via the MMC (as mentioned before) ensuring that most staff, whether IT or otherwise, will be used to this presentation. Much of the activity will be focused around reporting. Using the system to manage licenses and track usage across the user base.

OS/Device/Software support

The product is heavily focused on software management and reporting. It does pick up essential hardware details for machines on the network and in particular is aware of virtual machine technology that is in use throughout modern corporate businesses today. However it is clearly focused on the software side of things. The vendor claims to have over 100,000 manufacturer recognisable software entries in the database and this seems wholly feasible given the robust nature and maturity of the product.

Auditing and Reporting

A huge strength of the system. The reporting is where it all happens. Both from the ECM console and the dedicated reporting portal that is installed as part of the system. The sheer number of reports available in the reporting tool is daunting but demonstrates the heritage of the product. It's clear that the company has come from a strong software inventory management background. The reports are viewed as HTML and these can be printed in various formats (pdf, excel, csv and html).

Key Strengths -Technical

- Hugely technical and competent 'one stop shop' for large companies of 1500 devices and above
- Offers truly complete end to end solution

Key Weaknesses - Technical

- Overkill for smaller organizations, in this instance 1500 employees/users or below*
- Needs professional services to get the best from it

Licence Management Solution Review

Overview



- Quite a large client payload for installation over networks

Key Strengths - Commercial

- Massive database of supported hardware and software assets
- Mature product now on version 8
- Thorough payment tracking and scheduling
- Aimed at Fortune 1000 organisations
- A true 'one stop shop' off the shelf solution (if you include professional services)

Key Weaknesses - Commercial

- Aimed at large, often multi-site companies
- Expensive to implement for small companies

* It should be noted that ManageSoft pitch the product at larger organisations and rely on MSP partners to provide a cost-effective hosted solution for the SMB market

