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Oregon Army National Guard

G6 - Information Management Branch



Operating System Deployment Analysis

Jason Adsit

14 March 2016

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Abstract

This paper is an analysis of the operating system deployment (OSD) methodologies in the Oregon Army National Guard. Many external sources were used in conjunction with the development efforts of the G6 staff to construct stable, easy to use process for the Information Services Branch (ISB) to use going forward.

The lite-touch, high volume deployment setup that is now in production has doubled the productivity of the system imaging process. It is likely that when the ISB staff becomes more comfortable with the solution, productivity will take another similar jump.

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Introduction

It was identified that the Oregon Army National Guard's operating system deployment (OSD) process needed to be improved. The Information Services Branch (ISB) staff requested assistance in order to accomplish its goal of redesigning the OSD infrastructure to increase efficiency and consistency.

Problem

The following issues were raised to management concerning the current OSD process.

- It takes too long to image computers.
- The imaging process requires a lot of manual input, thus increasing errors.
- Freshly imaged systems are not fully patched and compliant.

Requirements

The project requirements included those defined by DCSIM leadership as well as several others discovered during design and implementation. The new OSD redesign project addresses the following:

- Design a lite-touch installation (LTI) OSD solution that is resilient and secure.
- Train the ISB staff and transition daily operations to the help desk.
- Attend the weekly Windows 10 working group with NGB G6.
- Identify systems that will not be upgradable to the new DoD Secure Host Baseline (SHB).

Architecture

The LTI solution leverages existing Microsoft technologies that are freely available for use. The core component of the solution is the Microsoft Deployment Toolkit (MDT). It is what is known as a solution accelerator. It leverages other Microsoft technologies and orchestrates them in such a way that the user is not required to learn all of the advanced scripting needed to automate operating system deployments. See Figure 1 – MDT with WDS, for an overview for the new imaging logic.

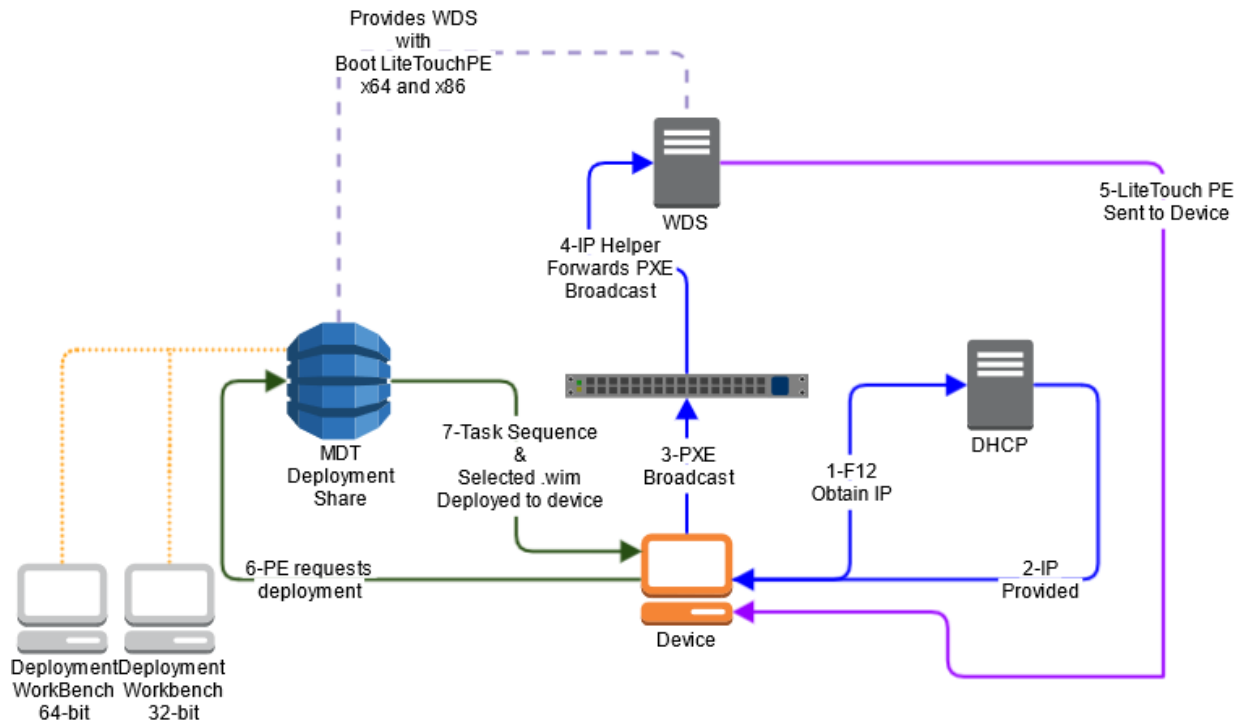


Figure 1 – MDT with WDS

Windows Assessment and Deployment Toolkit (ADK) does the actual boot image manipulation. Microsoft Deployment Toolkit (MDT) is the interface for the sysadmin to manipulate the OS Deployment and Application Installation logic. Windows Deployment Services (WDS) manages the transmission of images to the clients. This design does require that the correct DHCP options have been configured to allow PXE booting. Also, if multicast image transfer is desired, PIM must be enabled on the subnets where the clients reside.

Multicast deployment is preferred because it allows the system imaging work load to be massively parallelized without congesting the infrastructure. The servers hosting deployment shares only ever have to serve up a maximum of three imaging data streams. WDS dynamically detects the transfer speeds of the clients and divides them into slow, medium, and fast imaging streams accordingly.

Platform Management

One of the primary concerns of the ISB staff was that drivers were cumbersome to manage and difficult to deploy reliably. The new LTI solution removes this process from the list of things for the ISB to worry about. Drivers are downloaded for each platform, cataloged in a central store, and injected dynamically into the Windows during the deployment process.

The WinPE image that has been provided also includes the Dell Command Configuration toolkit. Using this tool, the system BIOS/UEFI can be upgraded from WinPE before the OS is installed. This will be a critical task to master. Once the organization begins rolling out the DoD SHB (Windows 10), up-to-date UEFI will be a prerequisite for implementing secure boot.

Hardware vendors' websites have a vast amount of information regarding platform specific driver packages. The deployment share is currently stocked with the latest driver packs as of the date of this report. The update process currently requires a sysadmin to download the drivers and import them into the deployment share.

When the SCCM 2012 roll-out is complete, the drivers and firmware will be managed by SCCM using a System Center Update Publisher (SCUP) catalog. SCCM can retrieve drivers and BIOS/UEFI updates directly from hardware vendors.

PowerShell

The entire build and deployment process can be accomplished without using MDT's graphical user interface at all. Simply installing MDT includes the PowerShell code needed to automate the OSD workflow.

The PowerShell code called by the graphical user interface is surfaced to the sysadmin via "View Script" buttons. These allow the code to be captured for later re-use without using the graphical UI. Figure 2 shows the PowerShell code that is being called when a deployment share is updated.

```
Import-Module "C:\Program Files\Microsoft Deployment Toolkit\bin\MicrosoftDeploymentToolkit.psd1"
New-PSDrive -Name "DS001" -PSProvider MDTProvider -Root "C:\DeploymentShare"
Update-MDTDeploymentShare -path "DS001:" -Compress -Verbose
```

Figure 2 – Example MDT PowerShell Code Snippet

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Automation

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The MDT workbench allows the sysadmin to skip panes in the deployment wizard and pre-answer the normal questions presented to the user. This allows the sysadmin to make the process repeatable and free from human error. It also doesn't let end-users opt out of mandatory applications. See Figure 2 – Example CustomSettings.ini.

```
[Settings]
Priority=INSTALL, Default
Properties=MyCustomProperty

[INSTALL]
SkipDeploymentType=YES
DeploymentType=NEWCOMPUTER
SkipApplications=YES
MandatoryApplications001={e7971139-8a85-4fe0-97e4-ec541843a887}
MandatoryApplications002={6e2dc470-690e-4a05-af84-b322d046290a}
MandatoryApplications003={6678a2c2-847b-4b4c-9eb7-ecfe0a1bba7}
MandatoryApplications004={1b93e53f-701a-4cf2-b09b-de1c7a09aa95}
MandatoryApplications005={7c3afe82-7408-4ea2-8ca5-8e5a4f9b99e2}
MandatoryApplications006={aa1237d4-0e56-441c-9169-b168d3a96d1a}
MandatoryApplications007={9fae0369-9069-4cf3-a5e8-a4884599d5a8}
MandatoryApplications008={de1b51a4-2e5d-49ef-ad12-1f955f429b7e}
MandatoryApplications009={ed9fbfa8-3499-46ff-b2cf-185c22235eb7}
MandatoryApplications010={d029409a-0c66-4df6-9b9c-cae08dd6ea73}
MandatoryApplications011={72fe3e2d-b11e-46a9-9848-d499f10ef87d}
MandatoryApplications012={382750c3-3630-45b0-9e5f-77c7768a987f}
MandatoryApplications013={a03fc9d9-2881-4933-91a7-07d019774dde}
MandatoryApplications014={646942cc-78ec-4b82-9e64-da2ec1c0148a}
MandatoryApplications015={cacad724-bfe9-4f96-85f2-f0f11a243efd}
MandatoryApplications016={0611969c-5d22-4a84-9fc3-b76176bfe3d2}
SkipComputerName=YES
OSDComputerName=mdt-%SerialNumber%
SkipUserData=YES
WSUSServer=https://wsus-server/
SkipPackageDisplay=YES

[Default]
OSInstall=Y
SkipBDDWelcome=YES
SkipWizard=NO
SkipTaskSequence=NO
SkipApplications=YES
SkipCapture=YES
SkipAdminPassword=YES
SkipComputerBackup=YES
SkipBitLocker=YES
BitLocker=NO
SkipDomainMembership=YES
JoinWorkgroup=WORKGROUP
NetworkLocation=Work
SkipComputerName=NO
SkipProductKey=YES
SkipBuild=YES
SkipAdminAccounts=YES
SkipRoles=YES
SkipSummary=YES
SkipFinalSummary=YES
OrgName=Some Organization
FullName=Someone
BitsPerPel=32
Xresolution=1
Yresolution=1
Vrefresh=60
FinishAction=REBOOT
SkipTimeZone=YES
TimeZoneName=Pacific Standard Time
SkipLocaleSelection=YES
KeyboardLocale=en-US
KeyboardLocalePE=0409:00000409
_SMSTSORGNAME=Name of Your IT Department
_SMSTSPackageName=OS Deployment Task Sequence
SLShare=\\mdt-server\DeploymentShare$\Logs
SLShareDynamicLogging=\\mdt-server\DeploymentShare$\Logs\%ComputerName%
EventService=http://mdt-server:9800
OSHome_Page=https://www.google.com/
```

Figure 3 – Example CustomSettings.ini

Remote Systems and DaRT

The MDT server has the Microsoft Diagnostics and Repair Tools (DaRT) installed which allows for remote control of systems once the WinPE environment has booted into memory via PXE. The systems to be imaged will show up under the monitoring node in MDT. The temporary computer names are suffixed with the value returned by the “%SerialNumber%” variable in the OSD environment running on a given computer. This way the sysadmin can correlate the system waiting to be imaged to a help desk ticket via the serial number.

Another advantage of using DaRT is the ability to remotely support systems that fail to boot into Windows or that have fallen off the domain. The sysadmin can simply instruct the user to power on the system, press F12, and go to lunch. Once the WinPE boots and DaRT remote control starts, the sysadmin can lock the remote system’s keyboard and mouse to prevent interference. The DaRT tools enable many advanced support scenarios including things like password reset, file recovery, and hotfix uninstall.

State Migration Points

The matter of user profiles and data will be addressed when the SCCM 2012 migration is complete. Sysadmins will use the User State Migration Tool to save user state to the network location defined in a task sequence. The process flow that will take place is illustrated by Figure 1 below.

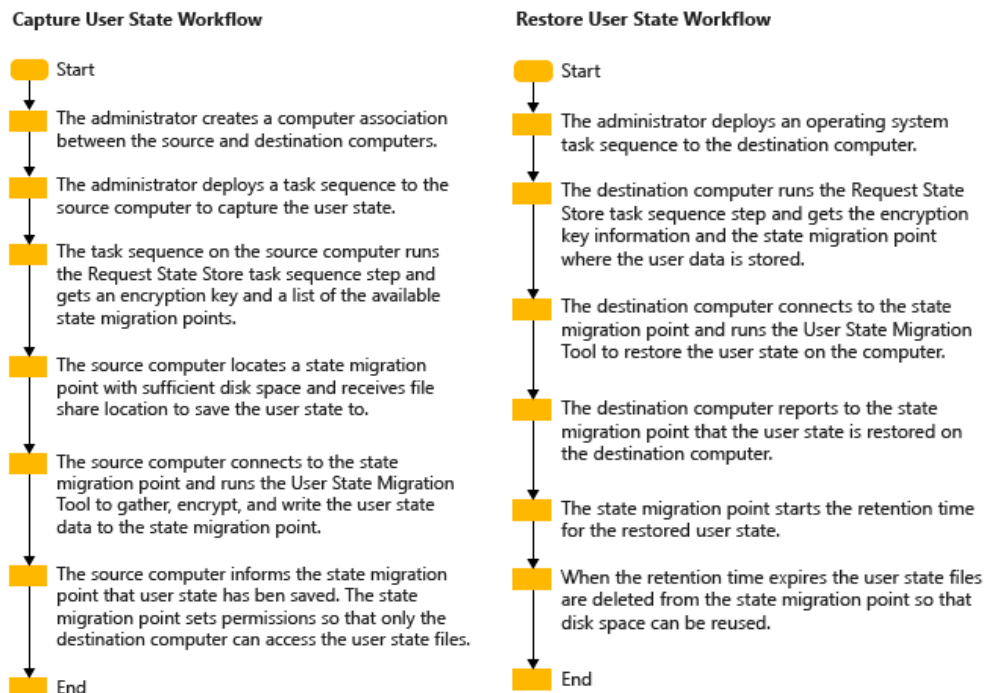


Figure 4 – User State Migration

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Follow-On Support

100 There will be an additional requirement for assistance when the ISB staff implements
 101 SCCM 2012 in April 2016. The integration of the provided OSD system with SCCM will
 102 require collaboration with the IMB and NGB G6. Once complete, the OSD process with
 103 move to what is known as zero-touch installation (ZTI). When the ISB is ready to begin
 104 engineering on the ZTI solution, they will request assistance from the IMB branch chief.

105

General Observations

106 The OSD process needs to be maintained on an ongoing basis to remain efficient,
 107 compliant, and secure. There are several lines of effort that are vital to the continued
 108 success of the new OSD process. They can be addressed by the following measures.

- 109 ▪ Participate in the weekly Windows 10 working group with NGB.
- 110 ▪ Use PowerShell daily.
- 111 ▪ Tightly integrate the sysadmins responsible for OSD and SCCM.
- 112 ▪ Deploy early and deploy often.
- 113 ▪ Servers should be treated as cattle, not pets.
- 114 ▪ Infrastructure as code. Do not make configuration adjustments manually. If the
 115 configuration is a process in your head, you're doing it wrong.
- 116 ▪ Manage expectations honestly. If your leadership is not fully informed of the state
 117 of your activities, they tend to hover.
- 118 ▪ Challenge organizational norms. Everyone has valuable input.
- 119 ▪ If it would be easier to do via group policy, then do it via group policy. Work-
 120 arounds are not a good solution at scale.
- 121 ▪ Communicate intent as well as process. Rapid information flow is critical.

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