



**AbsoluteSoftware**

**AbsoluteTrack**  
Secure computer Asset Tracking  
Solution



**White Paper**



Absolute Software helps organizations overcome security risks and asset management challenges associated with remote, mobile and desktop computers. Over 2000 customers, including Fortune 1000 companies, small and medium size businesses, education and government organizations rely on these solutions to secure and manage their computer population. Founded in 1993 - with international partners in South Africa, Australia and the United Kingdom - Absolute employs over 80 people in its headquarters in Vancouver, BC, and sales offices throughout the U.S.

The Computrace® Technology Platform is the client/server architecture that delivers Absolute's computer security and asset management products as software services or as enterprise software. Thanks to the hands-free communication between the secure, patented Computrace Agent client and Monitoring Center server, Absolute's products are exceptionally easy to manage on all computers across the enterprise.

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## **Problem Description**

In today's competitive business environment, information technology (IT) is playing an increasingly important role in the exchange of knowledge in day-to-day business functions. Individuals, systems, organizations, and other business assets are interconnected in this emerging economic web, and as this IT landscape grows increasingly complex, so does the need to efficiently manage computer assets. As a result, corporations now, more than ever, are recognizing the need to take control of their computer asset base, in order to maximize their investment and attempt to control costs.

The amount of time and fiscal resources required to manage computers in a network can be significant. These assets support key business processes such as e-commerce and business intelligence. If these assets are not protected, and there is no ability to proactively manage them, the potential for short and long-term loss is enormous.

One of the main challenges organizations are encountering is the ability to track the location and ongoing migration of their computers. Knowing what assets you have and how they are changing in time is fundamental to ongoing asset management. This knowledge also enables better planning and budgeting, such as hardware or software upgrades, or computer retirement. This problem is further compounded as companies expand geographically, and as the adoption of mobile and remote systems becomes increasingly popular. Keeping track of these assets is not only important for the value of the computer itself, but often more importantly, for the protection of the valuable data residing on the machine.

Tracking hardware, software, software licenses and tracking computers for the purpose of lease management are also significant areas that corporations are looking for a way to easily and proactively manage. In some larger decentralized networks, the task of managing all the various computer configurations is next to impossible, especially with respect to end-user installs of often unauthorized, sometimes illegal, software – this can result in significant penalties to the company. In the case of leased computers, IT and financial officers are discovering that the cost savings they may have incurred in leasing machines get eroded by the penalties incurred if the leased machines are not returned in time.

While organizations recognize the need for a tool to assist them in proactively managing their computer assets, it is important to choose a solution that will both maximize their return on investment in these assets and lead to improved end-user productivity.

This white paper outlines the main benefits of a computer asset tracking and inventory management solution by describing what problems it addresses and how. It will detail some of the most critical features necessary to proactively manage computers and reduce asset management costs, practices that are necessary to compete and succeed in today's technology driven climate.

## **Solving the Problem**

Solving the problem of managing the computer asset base involves empowering IT professionals to easily manage corporate resources. In order to understand how this can be done, we need to look at the definition of asset tracking and inventory management, and explore the common components of such a tool. We then examine how Absolute Software's secure computer Asset Tracking and Inventory Management solution supports these activities and can significantly reduce the cost and complexity of owning and managing computer assets, providing customers an immediate return on their investment.

## **What is Computer Asset Tracking?**

Computer asset tracking is the process of understanding what computers you have, where they are located, what is on them, and how this information is changing over time. In order to do this, an inventory of the hardware components and the software must be discovered and stored in a central asset data repository.

Typically, this task has been performed manually, through physical inventories. This can be a laborious process, with the data quickly becoming obsolete due to the dynamic nature of computers, as these are acquired, moved, changed, or retired. Ideal tracking and inventory management solutions automate the collection of computer inventory data, including location, hardware and software inventory, lease information, and software licensing.

A comprehensive computer asset tracking and inventory solution will capture this information on systems connected locally to the corporate network, as well as on remote and mobile systems connecting remotely via IP or dial-up. In addition, information needs to be captured on a regular basis to ensure the most up-to-date view of the assets is being provided.

Organizations can effectively leverage their computer asset base with an asset tracking solution that will allow them to:

- Ensure Software License Compliance
- Centralize Lease Information
- Control Computer and Hardware Loss
- Manage Install, Move, Add, and Change Activity
- Configure Alerts
- Better Plan and Budget
- Reduce Employee Downtime

## **The AbsoluteTrack Approach**

AbsoluteTrack is a secure asset tracking and inventory management solution powered by the Computrace technology platform. Whether used stand-alone, or as a complement to an existing asset management tool, AbsoluteTrack is a cost-effective application service for helping businesses of all sizes monitor remote, mobile and desktop computers and perform daily hardware and software inventory tracking functions.

AbsoluteTrack simplifies the management of software licenses, computer leases, machine retirement, hardware and software upgrades and device ownership by providing IT managers with easy-to-use web reporting tools. AbsoluteTrack is also a perfect solution for monitoring security policy violations, such as outdated virus definitions and the unauthorized addition of software and for controlling computer or component loss. AbsoluteTrack is also used as a diagnostics and preventative maintenance tool, which will reduce demands on help desk resources.

## How AbsoluteTrack Works



Fig. 1 AbsoluteTrack computer Asset Tracking and Inventory Management Process



AbsoluteTrack is based on Absolute's patented Computrace technology platform, which is comprised of the secure, patented **Computrace Agent** and the Absolute Monitoring Center. The hands-free communication between the Agent and the Monitoring Center ensures Absolute customers have secure access to up-to-date location information and comprehensive asset data about their entire computer inventory.

The Agent is a software client that resides on the hard drive of host computers. Once installed, the Agent automatically contacts the Monitoring Center on a regular basis transmitting location information and all auto-discovered asset data points. Ongoing communication between the Agent and the Monitoring Center requires no user intervention and is maintained via an Internet or phone connection. As long as the computer is turned on and has either a working modem or access to the Internet (through an ISP or through a company network), the Computrace Agent will be able to report asset data to the Monitoring Center.



All location and asset data transmitted to the **Absolute Monitoring Center** is kept in a central repository at Absolute Software and can be accessed 24x7 by authorized administrators via the secure web-based Absolute Console. When the Agent transfers location and asset data, the Monitoring Center sends the next scheduled call time and date to the Agent. The Monitoring Center archives all Agent transmissions, providing a current and accurate audit trail on each computer.



With AbsoluteTrack, IT administrators have an affordable & comprehensive tool to simplify day-to-day asset inventory management functions. Comprehensive asset data is delivered in the form of dynamically generated web reports via the Absolute Console, a secure area of [www.absolute.com](http://www.absolute.com). The reporting capability available on the Console is "self-serve", meaning that administrators are free to generate reports on-the-fly whenever they need information or need to make a decision about their computer inventory. Access is unlimited and administrators can access the Console at anytime, from anywhere.

**Alerts!** - Administrators are able to configure alerts so they are notified when a specific event occurs (e.g., RAM change, detection of unauthorized software, lease is due). Alerts are received via e-mail or pager.

## Process

For large software implementations, enterprises need to have processes in place that integrate with the tool's framework. IT Asset Management for example, which incorporates physical, financial and contractual data across multiple business units, is considered by industry analysts to be approximately 80% process, 20% tool. If the processes in place do not mesh, the tool's effectiveness can be significantly compromised. The changes required can involve gaining support from other business units, executive sponsorship, technology upgrades, and contract renegotiations, all leading to lengthy implementation cycles and ultimately higher complexity and costs.

AbsoluteTrack is virtually process-independent, which contributes to its rapid implementation. What this means is that the successful implementation of the solution does not depend on fundamentally re-engineering the way in which work is done across other business units, and the benefits and therefore payback of the tool can be seen quickly. With AbsoluteTrack, web reports are used as a supporting tool to analyze, and proactively manage a variety of areas that are affected by computer asset tracking and inventory management. The IT administrator can grant access to users in other departments to view or manage asset information, allowing other business units to manage areas for which they are responsible.

The AbsoluteTrack solution can operate independently from other applications. It is not a standardized infrastructure that requires the integration of other applications (e.g., procurement systems), or that requires investment in technology upgrades. In addition, AbsoluteTrack is a straightforward application that does not require a major corporate training initiative.

AbsoluteTrack is able to be effective immediately within an existing process framework, and will allow for the development and improvement of processes as the tool is used.

## The Business Benefits of AbsoluteTrack

*AbsoluteTrack provides a cost-effective, web-based solution that significantly reduces the total cost of ownership (TCO) and simplifies the management of your computer assets.*

Most organizations would agree that the cost to acquire and manage computer assets constitutes a significant financial investment. Companies track their computer assets to more efficiently manage them and to ultimately reduce total cost of ownership. IT managers know the first step to efficiently managing computer assets is knowing what computers they have, how they're configured, where they are and who has them.

Specifically, AbsoluteTrack assists organizations with the following:

### Inventory assets

Companies can simplify the task of inventorying assets with reports that identify where their computers are, who is using them, and what condition they are in. IT administrators can also track exact hardware and software configuration, hard disk space available and user information in order to ensure efficient use of their computing assets on an ongoing basis. This information is collected on computers whether they are connected to the LAN or whether they are remote or mobile computers located beyond the corporate firewall. Remote users in enterprises are growing substantially year over year, and research suggests that they cost as much as 50% more than LAN-attached users to manage – these increasing costs can be kept in check.

### **Ensure software license compliance**

When organizations are instructed to perform a software license audit, they must submit findings along with proof within 30 days. Compliance to the law is not as much about strict adherence to the numbers as it is “reasonable effort” to deter piracy. Organizations are asked for written audit procedures, and copies of past audits. This is where Absolute Software License Compliance plays a major role in facilitating compliance.

### **Manage lease returns easily**

As more and more organizations turn to leasing for lowering total cost of ownership, it becomes crucial to have an effective tool for monitoring where leased computers are and quickly finding them when they are due to be returned. This is often a very difficult task for companies that have a high number of mobile and remote workers. Not returning leased machines on time, or worse, not returning them at all, can have significant financial consequence for an organization. AbsoluteTrack allows IT administrators to keep lease information in a centralized location and to locate machines whenever they are needed.

### **Better plan and budget for machine upgrades and retirement**

What is the total cost of migrating an organization to a new Operating System? How long will it take? Whether upgrading a few machines or an entire organization, AbsoluteTrack will help IT departments accurately plan and budget for upgrades and retirement by knowing exactly which computers do not meet minimum requirements.

## **Other Benefits**

### **Protect corporate security**

Intentionally or unintentionally, employees' actions can compromise the security of an organization. AbsoluteTrack allows IT managers to automatically detect if a new modem has been added, if an anti-virus program is outdated and even if unauthorized software has been installed. A breach in these areas can lead to a compromise in the security of corporate data, ultimately translating to a potential loss of revenue.

### **Control loss**

AbsoluteTrack is an efficient tool for helping organizations tackle a serious problem – computer loss. With the help of AbsoluteTrack's web reports, IT administrators can keep track of the movement of computers as they drift from employee to employee, department to department, to home offices, to the home of contractors and even into the hands of employees' extended families. This is especially critical when protecting valuable data on the computer is of particular importance.

### **Reduce help desk costs**

AbsoluteTrack can assist IT departments with diagnosing problems and performing preventative maintenance. For example, AbsoluteTrack reports can identify the Operating System, hardware and software of machines to assist in troubleshooting. Also, help desk staff will benefit from understanding which machines have outdated virus definitions, and identifying computers that have limited hard disk space available.

### **Integrate data**

AbsoluteTrack supports the integration of data via SNMP to other software tools enabling SNMP integration. In addition, within the Absolute Customer Center, data can be imported or exported in comma separated value (CSV) format. Six custom fields are available for users to customize, as well as a customer defined asset tag field, which allows users integrate current industry-standard bar code technology data.

### **Reduce Total Cost of Ownership**

Although the management of assets is a function that primarily will reside within the IT department, the savings expected from a computer asset tracking and inventory management solution will filter through to several business units:

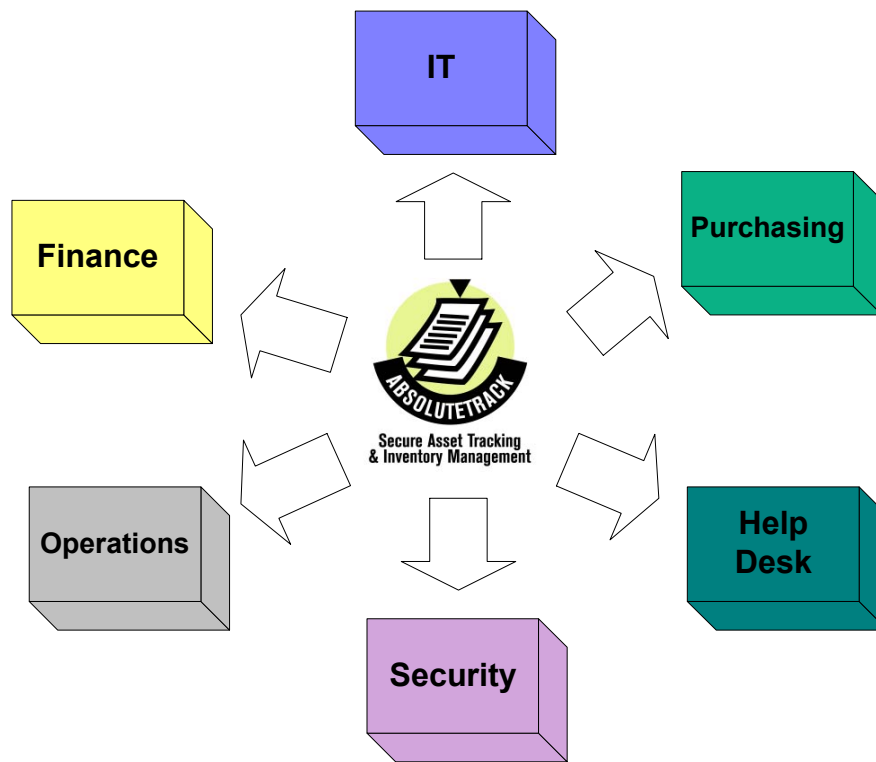


Fig. 2 – Reducing cost across multiple business units

These savings are generated by benefiting from an analysis tool that provides comprehensive reports with the knowledge needed to make the best IT decisions.

Following are the main areas where total cost of ownership can be reduced:

## **Optimize Productivity**

AbsoluteTrack can reduce employee downtime in the following ways:

- Save effort and time from better planned software migrations or upgrades, license compliance and lease management initiatives.
- By proactively managing computer assets, the IT Administrator will be able to streamline hardware and software upgrades and the replacement of machines.
- Free up the administrator's monitoring effort by configuring alerts to proactively manage areas of concern.
- With accurate and reliable asset data, Help Desk support is minimized, response time is faster, and troubleshooting is made easier. In addition, by being more proactive with the management and maintenance of computer resources, organizations can avoid many break-and-fix situations that tie-up help desk staff and cause employee downtime. All of this helps the support team's goal of minimizing workstation downtime.
- AbsoluteTrack is transparent to the end-user, and operates invisibly behind the scenes - there is no need for the end-user to start up an application or click an e-mail attachment in order to initiate an inventory.

## **Optimize Investments**

Companies will make better use of both the hardware and software they have invested in by understanding what machines they are deployed on, and to what users they belong. This allows the administrator to ensure that all assets, hardware components and software are fully utilized, and ensure that any change or migration has been authorized.

- Use change reports to be aware of unauthorized changes to hardware or software, or missing computers
- Better forecast future IT spending based by exporting and analyzing historical asset data
- Avoid license overbuying

## **Protect against Financial Penalties**

- Avoid software piracy and license non-compliance penalties - While over-deployment can mean huge financial penalties, under-deployment means that an investment is not maximized. AbsoluteTrack allows organizations to better monitor their compliance to software license contracts.
- Avoid lease penalties - If you do not keep the computer for the full term of the contract and return it early, or if you return the computer past the lease return date, you can be charged a lump sum for the remainder of the lease, or assessed a penalty.

## **Conclusion**

Organizations make significant and continuous investment in technology assets to remain competitive. These resources must be used effectively to receive the maximum return on investment. Asset tracking solutions enable organizations to determine exactly what their assets look like today, as well as the speed and direction of change. Once an asset tracking and inventory management tool such as AbsoluteTrack is in place, there are several areas a company can focus on to reduce cost using this critical information, thus allowing the organization to make critical IT planning and management decisions that will optimize investments and productivity.