Parallels® Mac Management for Microsoft® SCCM

Reykjavik city administration manages Mac with Microsoft SCCM

The Organization

Until the middle of the 20th century, Iceland's capital, Reykjavik, was more of a village than a city. Since then, it has undergone rapid development; former sheep-breeding and fishing communes have now combined into one ultra-modern metropolis with excellent economic and cultural infrastructure. The tasks of Reykjavik's city administration, within which different organizational units provide key services for other specialist areas, are quite varied. With its 50 employees, the IT department plays a key role and ensures the availability of all IT-based processes throughout the organization. Systems management, or the centralized management of hardware and software, is the responsibility of Halldór-Ingi H. Guðmundsson. He is one of several administrators in the department responsible for around 10,000 computers that run every major operating system.

The Initial Situation

A large variety of applications in Windows®, Mac®, and Linux® environments were being used in the different departments of the city administration. In addition to standard solutions from SAP®, Autodesk®, Microsoft®, Adobe®, and Citrix®, a wide range of customized programs met the specific requirements of individual functions. In order to be able to manage this heterogeneous IT landscape as efficiently as possible, the administration implemented Microsoft® System Center Configuration Manager (SCCM) in 2006, making it possible to carry out inventories, distribute software, monitor licenses, and perform remote maintenance and anti-malware management of the entire fleet in a centralized manner.

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By 2015, however, approximately 200 Mac devices, belonging mostly to the graphics team, were excluded from this central system. Because they weren't automatically recognized by SCCM, the hardware and software inventories of Apple® computers were inaccessible, with serious consequences for the security of the IT infrastructure, among other things. Administratiors were unable to ensure that all Mac users had the latest security patches installed, and there was no clear overview as to which programs were used in which versions on the Mac machines. New software versions had to be installed manually on MacBook®, Mac mini, and iMac devices, which were scattered throughout the organization. In contrast to Windows machines, remote maintenance was impossible. Every time a problem arose that could not be solved by the user, an employee from Guðmundsson's team had to be called in.

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The Solution

In the summer of 2015, a friend and IT colleague recommended that Guðmundsson take a closer look at Parallels Mac Management for SCCM because it could solve all his problems at once. His colleague told him that Parallels Mac Management made it possible to recognize and register Mac devices in the network automatically. It could provide software packages, security patches, entire configuration profiles, and OS X® images centrally. Instead of sending his employees throughout the building as before, Guðmundsson could use the Parallels solution to install authorized applications for the users via a self-service portal, and even set up any number of virtual machines, as and when necessary. In addition, the full integration of the Apple Device Enrollment Program (DEP) could be used to deliver new Mac machines without the IT department having to handle them. As soon as a user turned on a new device for the first time, DEP would provide a profile-based configuration of account settings, applications, and access to the organization services via an MDM server.

Guðmundsson's curiosity was piqued and he immediately requested a Parallels Mac Management trial. Over subsequent weeks of intensive testing on Hyper-V® servers, it turned out that Parallels Mac Management had several advantages compared to the alternate OS X Server from Apple as an admin platform. After testing all functions and easily addressing any problems that arose as a result of the enormous number of hosts, the city administration chose the Parallels Mac Management solution. It has been an essential part of the IT infrastructure of Reykjavik's city administration since autumn 2015.

The Results

When Guðmundsson thinks back to the days before implementing Parallels Mac Management, he shudders slightly. "The expense of the comparatively small Mac flotilla in our organization sometimes made me break out in a sweat. Although most of our Mac users are technically competent to deal with problems or administrative tasks themselves, we had to go out regularly to restore operations. As you can imagine, there is hardly anything worse for the security and efficiency of a huge IT infrastructure than not knowing exactly what is and isn't installed on the staff's computers. Thanks to Parallels Mac Management, this nightmare is now over. If I don't get a good night's sleep now, it's for different reasons."

For Guðmundsson, there are several core features that make Parallels Mac Management indispensable to his organization: the automatic detection and registration of all Mac devices, including software inventory, central management of the configuration profiles, and the smooth distribution of software updates and security patches. He explains, "We now keep a close eye on our Mac devices, like our Windows computers, through the SCCM Reporting Dashboard. By leveraging native Microsoft SCCM reports, Parallels Mac Management provides us with all the relevant information, and through OS X configuration profiles, we can significantly improve adherence to compliance requirements. Through the Parallels Mac Management license management portal, we keep a close eye on the most important information, like licensing and usage statistics, and have a real-time overview of licensing activities, which makes it easier to manage all deployed licenses. As an administrator, I can view, deploy, disable, and set a blacklist through a dedicated account. The times when Mac devices were separate entities, and when we didn't know what unpleasant surprises they contained, are thankfully over. Since every Apple user no longer has to work as an administrator and can concentrate on his/her own job, I am sure that Parallels Mac Management has not only had a very positive effect on the productivity of the IT department, but also on that of the departments we serve."

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