

APPLICATION PACKAGING IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE



Getronics

a KPN company

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INSIDE EVERY ENTERPRISE, THERE ARE HUNDREDS OR EVEN THOUSANDS OF OFF-THE-SHELF AND BESPOKE APPLICATIONS RUNNING EVERY DAY. THE COST AND COMPLEXITY OF MANAGING THESE ESSENTIAL BUSINESS RESOURCES HAS BECOME A SERIOUS BURDEN.

The scenario is further complicated by continual changes to the underlying landscape. These changes have direct repercussions for application management in general - and for application packaging in particular. They include amongst others:

- Changes or upgrades to the operating system.
- A shift from the 'fat desktop' to server-based and virtual desktop infrastructures.
- The uptake of application streaming as the preferred means of provisioning.

Changes such as these demand expert project management if they are to be conducted effectively across multiple sites and international operations. It becomes essential that any application modification required by such changes is managed with clinical efficiency.

Costs must, of course, be contained. But more importantly, the continuation of service for those who rely on the applications cannot be compromised.

With internal IT resources being squeezed to deliver extra value, more and more organizations are choosing to contract-out essential application packaging.

But what should the IT-decision maker look for in a potential provider of application packaging services?

MAKING YOUR LIFE EASIER

To get the true benefit from contracting-out application packaging, you must feel confident that your service provider can deliver accordingly to your internal standards, on-time and within budget. The service provider must be able to demonstrate a strong track record in delivering application packaging services.

Timing is particularly critical, since this activity also requires costly business attention for testing and acceptance. The provider must offer the flexibility to fit his schedule and resources to your internal project plan.

Simplicity is a virtue too. If the service provider is able to industrialize the work, then their chances of getting it right

first time - every time - increase significantly. Absolutely key to simplification, is the ability to re-purpose existing packages rather than construct new ones. To effectively re-purpose, the provider will of course need to stay up-to-speed with the latest automated toolsets.

In order to streamline and simplify the service, successful providers will be keen to take end-to-end responsibility. Ideally, the scope of responsibility will span:

- Initial research and analysis
- Application intake
- Consolidation and compatibility testing
- Application (re)packaging
- Facilitate user-acceptance testing
- Ongoing distribution and control


Only when your provider can offer this scope, the cooperation will genuinely reduce your workload and increase efficiency. In this scenario - although collaboration is encouraged throughout the process - the practical demands made on the enterprise IT resources are largely limited to providing existing packages and essential user-acceptance testing.

AUTOMATION FOR DIFFERENTIATION

Although application packaging and distribution across the enterprise is continuous, there will inevitably be a real surge during any major migration. The only way to ensure that it is brought under maximum control during these critical periods is to industrialize repackage automation: there is no room for an artisan approach or mentality.

Automation for application packaging is not a one-off: once the process is established, all future software distribution will be managed with the same industrial quality, discipline and speed.

Getronics was among the first ICT service providers to recognize the need to industrialize automation. Its Rapid Deployment eXperience (RDX) toolset, launched in 2001, continues to address the need for mass roll-out of Microsoft products and updates to both desktop and server environments.



With its focus on workspace management, Getronics has continued to invest in its application packaging and distribution skills. Today, not surprisingly, this reflects current interests and priorities, including:

- Automated conversion of application packaging formats
- Provision of software streaming for full virtualization
- Comprehensive compatibility checking
- Impact testing and prioritisation

By combining these skills and automated toolsets, Getronics is able to provide a failsafe service. Both off-the-shelf and bespoke applications, can be rigorously tested for readiness with Microsoft Vista, Office 2007, Windows 7 or Internet Explorer 8, prior to roll-out. Automated analysis indicates into which of three categories any given application falls:

- Ready-to-run – no package change required
- Package remediation required
- Applications require rewrite or substitution

When a package does need remediation, the toolset provides a largely automated process, shrinking time-to-distribution and minimizing cost. Typically, around 80% of remediation can be achieved without noteworthy manual intervention. Getronics makes strong use of the ChangeBase AOK environment in which expert systems rapidly check all dependencies between applications, patches and operating systems.

SYNERGIES AND STANDARDS

'Lift and shift' is the ideal in application packaging, but the ideal can all too often remain elusive. Full blown migration, for example, from Windows XP to Windows 7 is not without its challenges. For the enterprise, manual or semi-automated packaging can be just about sufficient for restricted projects on a minor scale. Once, a major migration is on the horizon however, manual operations just cannot perform under time and volume pressures.

The same is true for many migrations from physical to virtual server environments or from fat to thin-client architectures.

In these situations, any service provider offering application packaging should be committed to fully exploiting advances

in automation to the full. The value-added from your chosen service provider will also come from their expertise in planning and their ability to manage the anomalies presented by custom and legacy applications.

These skills become increasingly important as the move to Virtual Desktop Infrastructures gathers momentum. When applications must be streamed the provider should be able to provide balanced advice on access viability and on the best approach to application delivery – no matter how appealing VDI is, it is not suited for all applications or situations.



Just as your service provider should be expert in exploiting the migration resources offered by major software vendors, they should also demonstrate commitment and compliance to project management and governance standards. Best practices as defined in ITIL V3, for example, should be evident while project management certifications such as PRINCE 2 are increasingly regarded a requirement rather than a feature.


ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With its core focus on workspace management and on the creation of dynamic workspace infrastructures, Getronics is in a strong position to advise on all aspects of application packaging. This issue is particularly hot right now for a number of reasons:

- The introduction of Windows 7 coupled with an end to support for Windows XP, places a growing load on the packaging pipeline.
- Increasing interest in virtualized models demands reliable and industrialized application packaging.
- The continuing drive to consolidate applications across the enterprise leads to constant revision.
- Compliance and licensing issues increase the pressure to achieve enterprise-level control over all application assets.

As an essential element in any migration project, application packaging has become a highly-specialized discipline. Even though the distribution technologies from all major software providers have increased notably in scope and sophistication, for the enterprise it is not enough simply to 'press the button'.





Getronics recommends that any organization seeking to optimize and control software distribution and application packaging, takes a number of practical actions before deciding on policy. Remember, this is all about creating a durable standard and approach for the future while making sure that your people have the applications they need to do business.

- Keep in-house or contract-out? – decide what works best for you. If you keep this capability in-house, you must be prepared to maintain dedicated resources and to ensure that they stay up to date.
- If you are looking to contract-out, demand to see evidence of consistency and of excellence in project management. Look carefully at standards and certifications – familiarity with standard packaging tools is not enough.
- Ensure that the proposed partner is fully capable of coordinating clearly designated application management responsibilities within the context of complex migration initiatives.
- Reject artisan practice ruthlessly – your proposed partner must demonstrate the highest degree of automation.
- Get your provider to make their position clear on the re-use of existing packages – and make sure that they are equipped with the tools and skills to do so.
- Look for the value-add – if your application packaging service provider is offering an end-to-end service, ensure that you gain in terms of application-usage intelligence and compliance.
- Compare costs and service levels – cost and service models for application packaging services are not always easy to compare, but do make sure that total costs are transparent and that service levels are clearly defined and understood.
- Start small – get the provider to demonstrate their abilities in a controlled test environment.

More information

If you would like to talk to Getronics about putting any of these actions to the test, contact maps@getronics.com.



