POLICY ON THE ACCEPTABLE USE OF SOFTWARE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT & DEPLOYMENT

TOOLS

Approved by the UNL Faculty Senate

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Overview:

A Client Mangement Tool (CMT) is a tool for managing user computers such as desktops and laptops. Its main use is for installing and updating software and inventorying licensed software. Technology tools such as these allow processes to be automated for efficiency, enabling IT personnel to provide better services with equal or diminished resources. Additionally, UNL Procurement Services needs accurate information about licensed software usage to verify license compliance to mitigate risk of legal liability and to effectively negotiate with software vendors.

To enable their functionality, a CMT adds administrator access to a computer for IT personnel. More information on CMTs and their capabilities can be found in the attached "Frequently Asked Questions about CMTs at UNL". Access to a computer and its data by someone other than the user raises issues of privacy and academic freedom (while making no assumption of ill intent by those administering a CMT). The following items describe the acceptable use of CMTs at UNL.

Policies for acceptable use of CMTs:

The use of a CMT is voluntary for individual faculty on an opt-in basis. A user who opts to not use a CMT may receive less efficient IT support, but should not be treated differently in ways unrelated to the CMT. All users are responsible for ensuring that all software is compliant with licenses and for providing verification if necessary.

All uses of CMTs will comply with university policies and will respect privacy and faculty academic freedom. University of Nebraska Executive Memorandum No. 16 'Policy for Responsible Use of University Computers and Information Systems' Section 7b specifically prohibits university IT personnel from accessing individual user files or data unless necessary for maintenance or repair.

All CMT activity is logged at UNL, and the logs can be accessed only by UNL personnel (the system vendor of CMTs will not have access to the CMT system installed at UNL). Units will have access to CMT activity logs and be able to run reports on the activity in their area. A faculty member may see the activity logs for his or her machine upon request.

Actions taken using CMTs (such as installing or updating software) should be initiated only by the IT staff within a unit in accordance with the unit's IT policies. Information Services is available to provide technical assistance with using CMTs. CMTS will only be used centrally for generalized reporting on software usage (particularly for license negotiation) and for software license compliance.

Frequently Asked Questions about CMTs at UNL:

1. What is a CMT?

A CMT is a tool UNL has licensed to help manage users' computers such as desktops and laptops. Its primary uses are to automate the process of installing and updating software and to inventory software for compliance of licenses.

2. Who controls what a CMT is doing on my computer?

A CMT on your computer is controlled by your local IT staff that provides your IT support; usually this is someone in your department or college. It is UNL policy that actions taken using CMTs should be initiated by the local IT staff.

3. Why does the university need an inventory of licensed software?

UNL licenses many software applications for use by faculty, staff, and students. For software licensed for a limited number of installations, the contracts include a standard clause stating that UNL must verify to the software vendor that all copies of the software on UNL computers are licensed. If unsatisfied with UNL's accounting of the usage of the software, the software vendor may initiate an audit of all UNL computers to perform this verification (usually performed by a third party). As CMTs report the software installed on user computers, UNL can ensure it is compliant with software licenses and can provide this evidence to vendors.

Additionally, understanding the usage of licensed software may help Procurement to negotiate better prices with software vendors for commonly used software.

4. How are software updates scheduled?

CMTs have the ability to show messages to users informing them of what is occurring. Updates can be scheduled so that users can defer them to more convenient times, or can be scheduled to occur immediately, or at certain times during the day (such as at night). Computers can be put in different groups that affect how and which actions are taken on the machine. For instance, a "Do not update" group could be applied to lab machine that is doing data acquisition continuously for 3 months.

5. What information does a CMT gather about my computer?

CMTs gather basic hardware information (such as type of CPU, type of videocard, size of hard drive, etc); which OS and system patches are installed; and a list of all installed software (as would appear in the list of installed software displayed in the Microsoft Windows Control Panel). A CMT may do "metering" of software that tracks its usage (how frequently the software is used by the user), but this is resource intensive on the user's machine and so is turned off by default.

6. What platforms do CMTs run on?

CMTs run on Microsoft Windows (XP, 7, and 8), Mac OS X, and certain distributions of Linux (RedHat, CentOS, SUSE, and Ubuntu).

7. How do I tell if a CMT is installed on my computer?

On Microsoft Windows: A CMT will appear in the list of installed programs in the Control Panel.

On Mac OS X: The CMT process will appear in the Activity Monitor as "?????".

8. How do I have a CMT uninstalled if one is installed on my computer and I choose to not opt-in to its use on my computer?

Contact your unit's IT staff that provides IT support for your computer (this is usually someone in your department or college). In addition to uninstallation of CMTs, discuss with them alternate means of providing IT support for your computer.

9. Can a CMT be used to access my files, email, web browser history, or other data on my computer?

CMTs does not have built-in features that allow access to any data files on the machine, including email or web browsing history. However, some CMTs do have a powerful scripting feature to enable additional actions on the machine. Scripting could be used, for example, to perform a special configuration for a newly installed application. The scripting feature can be used to access data on the machine by IT staff using a CMT, but it requires explicit intent to create and run such scripts.

All employees and students of UNL are expected to respect privacy, but IT staff have a particular responsibility to respect users' privacy because of their access to computer systems. NU Executive Memorandum No. 16 explicitly states the policy for appropriate use of access to systems by IT personnel:

"7b. Repair and Maintenance of Equipment. Users should be aware that on occasion duly authorized University information systems technological personnel have authority to access individual user files or data in the process of performing repair or maintenance of computing equipment the University deems is reasonably necessary, including the testing of systems in order to ensure adequate storage capacity and performance for University needs. Information systems technological personnel performing repair or maintenance of computing equipment are prohibited by law from exceeding their authority of access for repair and maintenance purposes or from making any use of individual user files or data for any purpose other than repair or maintenance services performed by them."

10. Does a CMT reduce our computer security because it is a single point of vulnerability?

UNL computer systems are being constantly probed from outside for vulnerabilities, and it is important that all computers have all security updates installed. One of the primary uses of a CMT is to ensure security updates are applied to user computers in a timely fashion. Such security updates include not only operating system updates from Microsoft and Apple, but also security updates to common software such as Java or from Adobe.

11. Will a CMT slow down my computer?

A CMT is designed to consume very little resources, and most users should not notice it running on their machines.

12. Are CMTs currently being used on campus?

CMTs are currently being used on about 6500 computers at UNL, which include both staff and some faculty.

13. Why would a faculty member choose to have a CMT on his/her computer?

A CMT can be used to make the process of installing and updating software and installing security updates more efficient. This allows our IT personnel to provide better support, and can use saved time to better support us in other aspects of our mission. A CMT may also be less invasive for monitoring of software license compliance than an audit performed for a software vendor by a third party, and information on software usage may help Procurement to negotiate better prices with software vendors for commonly used software.