

**Tivoli** software



**Select inventory and software distribution tools that simplify PC and server management.**

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Middleware is Everywhere Can you see it?



Creating an accurate inventory of the hardware and software used throughout your organization — and distributing new applications and patches when needed — are crucial IT maintenance tasks. To maintain security, check compliance, give end users the tools they need to be productive and properly track software licenses, every organization must efficiently manage inventory and software distribution.

The problem is that often, these tasks are managed in ways that are too complex, time-consuming and expensive. This is especially challenging when available IT skills and administrator staff time is limited — or when you have little money to address the problem. For small and midsize businesses — as well as departments and workgroups within larger enterprises — it is crucial to automate and simplify inventory and software distribution management.

But how can you find basic, affordable tools that help you address these needs effectively? This buyer's guide can help simplify the process of selecting the right solution. Read on to learn more about what to look for — and to view a handy chart of the key purchasing criteria for inventory and software distribution management solutions.

### **Understand the key requirements**

Primarily, your organization will look for a simple, competitively priced package that has a complete suite of capabilities for managing software inventory and automating delivery of software and updates such as patches.

But an ideal solution would accomplish even more. It would give you tools that target the pressing security concerns you face, such as viruses and worms that could cripple your ability to keep your business up and running. And it would include features that are designed specifically for small and midsize organizations — such as user-friendly interfaces that save time and require less skill, and a clear migration path to enterprise-class software when your business grows — to help you derive significant value from a limited initial investment.

Let's look at each of these requirements in greater detail.

### ***Inventory***

Because PCs (desktops and laptops) and servers are often scattered geographically — particularly if you have branch offices or a substantial mobile workforce — even the seemingly simple act of tracking all your hardware and software assets can be a major challenge. IT staff must take time away from their high-priority tasks to physically visit each machine, and end users usually have to stop working while their PCs are inspected or updated.

Look for a solution that enables your IT staff to automate inventory tracking and distribution management from a remote location — and that helps to minimize the disruption to end users.

Leading solutions also make it easy to keep up-to-the-moment, highly detailed inventories to help your organization:

- *Generate highly accurate target lists for your software and patch distribution processes.*
- *Align software licenses and hardware exactly with your needs.*
- *Facilitate license reconciliation.*
- *Rapidly identify the sources of problems that stem from configuration changes.*

### **Software distribution**

The frustrations and inefficiencies of manual software distribution processes can be substantial. After IT staff decide that a software package or a patch should be deployed, they must identify each target (PC and/or server) for new software and patches. Next, they must determine for each machine if any prerequisite software must be installed or if configuration changes need to be made. Then they must visit each target one at a time to make the changes, often at times that are inconvenient for the administrator, the end user or both.

All the while, security vulnerabilities persist and users remain unable to access software that could make them more productive.

What your organization needs is a way to give end users access to software that keeps them safe and secure, up and running, and productive — quickly and without draining valuable IT resources. Look for a simple way to automatically draw on up-to-date inventory data to generate a target list of the devices that need a particular piece of software or patch. When you have a centralized point of control that has a Web interface, you help your organization efficiently, consistently and cost-effectively align systems with security policies and other business requirements.

### **Security compliance and audits**

Security is such a pressing concern, and time-consuming audits are so common for nearly every business. It's important to make sure that the basic inventory and software distribution solution you select has tools that are specifically designed to help protect your organization from viruses, worms and more. When you use automated tools to identify potential vulnerabilities and resolve them rapidly, you help:

- *Maximize the availability of your systems.*
- *Protect business data from external threats.*
- *Lower the frequency and cost of addressing service requests from users.*
- *Establish control over your IT asset inventory and utilize it efficiently.*

### **Small to midsize business focus**

Price is obviously a crucial issue for smaller organizations, but the solution you select should have more than a low sticker price. Make sure that it helps alleviate the need to rely on IT staff with advanced skills — who are in short supply and whose time is valuable to the organization and can be better spent on higher-priority tasks. A solution should enable end users to easily pull software down to their PCs and accomplish other simple management tasks. User-friendly software should be an absolute requirement.

Also consider future business growth and select a solution that can grow with you — upgrading smoothly when your business grows. That's another important way to make sure that you get the greatest possible value out of the investment you make today.



### Identify solutions that are ideal for small and midsize organizations

Whether you are creating a request for proposals (RFP) for inventory or software distribution solutions, or evaluating solutions from various vendors, you can use the following tables to identify software that is simple, effective and well designed for your business.

<b>Look for a solution that enables you to automate tracking and reporting of asset information:</b>	<b>IBM</b>	<b>Other vendor</b>
• Accurately identify, track and report on hardware, software, patches and owners.	✓	
• Collect information across geographically distributed environments.	✓	
• Easily control which data you collect from a simple-to-use, Web-based administrative interface.	✓	
• Automatically generate and distribute saved reports on schedules that you set.	✓	
• Leverage a large set of standard reports out of the box, plus customize and save reports for future use.	✓	
• Help speed license reconciliation by comparing executable files with a list of licensable software that the vendor maintains, rather than by compiling such a list manually.	✓	
• Compare current and historical configurations to simplify troubleshooting.	✓	
• Allow end users to track and manage their own assets from a Web-based interface.	✓	

<b>Look for a solution that enables you to facilitate efforts to comply with security policies and respond quickly to audits:</b>	<b>IBM</b>	<b>Other vendor</b>
• Track compliance with your security policies for antivirus and firewall software, as well as for Microsoft® Windows® password lengths and ages.	✓	
• Efficiently deploy security updates to all end-user workstations in your organization.	✓	
• Take advantage of a complete set of prebuilt, standard reports that facilitate auditing — plus the ability to easily create customized reports.	✓	

<b>Look for a solution that enables you to optimize manageability, resource efficiency and cost-effectiveness with a solution designed especially for small and midsize organizations:</b>	<b>IBM</b>	<b>Other vendor</b>
• Enable anyone who can install a Windows application to execute advanced inventory and software distribution management functions.	✓	
• Minimize the “footprint” (agent size) required to manage software and hardware across the organization.	✓	
• Give users single sign-on and consistent user experiences across inventory and software distribution interfaces.	✓	
• When your business grows, follow a clear, simplified migration path to an enterprise-class inventory and software distribution solution.	✓	
• Deploy a solution that’s priced competitively for small and midsize organizations.	✓	

<b>Look for a solution that enables you to efficiently deliver and update business software company wide:</b>	<b>IBM</b>	<b>Other vendor</b>
• Rapidly identify which machines (PCs and/or servers) need updated software and software patches — plus determine hardware and software prerequisites.	✓	
• “Push” application software and patches out to machines to quickly address security problems or end-user requests, without end-user intervention.	✓	
• Enable users to easily “pull” prepackaged software from a Web-based catalog.	✓	
• Simplify the process of creating packages for administrators.	✓	
• Use dynamic distribution lists generated by inventory software to help maximize accuracy.	✓	
• Automatically update inventory data each time software distribution occurs.	✓	

## **IBM delivers a range of easy-to-use, feature-rich, affordable products**

When you're ready to work with integrated products for managing inventory and software distribution across your organization, turn to IBM. Because IBM provides solutions that are easy to use and priced appropriately for small and midsize businesses, it is an ideal vendor for your organization.

IBM solutions for inventory and software distribution include:

- **IBM Tivoli® Provisioning Manager Express for Inventory** – *An easy-to-use, end-to-end asset tracking solution for accurately identifying and reporting on hardware, software, patches, owners and more.*
- **IBM Tivoli Provisioning Manager Express for Software Distribution** – *Simplifies creation and distribution of software packages for both IT staff and end users, thanks to flexible “push” and “pull” capabilities. The solution includes the capabilities of Tivoli Provisioning Manager Express for Inventory in one tightly integrated solution.*

Together, these IBM offerings enable you to meet all the key criteria for inventory and software management solutions outlined in this buyer's guide.



### **About Tivoli software from IBM**

Tivoli software from IBM helps organizations efficiently and effectively manage information technology (IT) resources, tasks and processes in order to meet ever-shifting business requirements and deliver flexible and responsive IT service management, while helping to reduce costs. The Tivoli portfolio spans software for security, compliance, storage, performance, availability, configuration, operations and IT lifecycle management, and is backed by world-class IBM services, support and research.

### **For more information**

To learn more about Tivoli Provisioning Manager Express for Software Distribution, Tivoli Provisioning Manager Express for Inventory and integrated solutions from IBM, contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit [ibm.com/tivoli/smb](https://ibm.com/tivoli/smb)



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