



8 QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK ABOUT LINUX SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT

IT organizations are always looking for ways to save money and time without compromising on issues like security or compliance. When choosing a systems management solution for your Linux environment, there are more considerations than just licensing or subscription costs. The ideal systems management solution serves the needs of the business.

Exploring the value of your systems management solution is a lot easier when you know the right questions to ask. We have a few suggestions for how to get started:

1. HOW ARE WE MANAGING OUR LINUX SYSTEMS TODAY?

The reliability and stability of Linux is well known among system administrators. But that doesn't mean that your systems don't need to be managed – especially in today's changing environments. Systems still need updates. They need to address the latest security threats. And you still have to be concerned with how fast you can deploy your systems. The more mission-critical these systems are, the more you need a systems management solution that gets the most out of them.



At the same time, do-it-yourself (DIY) management is not always the right answer. While there may be tools available to do this, even the free tools aren't actually free. DIY tools can have their own hidden costs. Why spend your time building out a systems management solution, when you could be focused on activities that are critical to your organization?

HOW RED HAT CAN HELP:

To get the most out of your investment, you need a best-of-breed approach to manage your systems, not a solution that's cobbled together or repeatedly resuscitated by your best system administrator. Red Hat systems management solutions alleviate the burden of maintaining code and scripts, putting the systems administration team back into the business of managing systems, rather than building one-off custom solutions.

2. HOW FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE IS OUR TEAM TO CHANGE IN OUR ENVIRONMENT?

If environments didn't change, you wouldn't need systems management. But the reality is that environments do change – often. And so do the priorities in your organization. IT is expected to do more than simply provide reliable, cost effective services; you must also deliver an agile infrastructure that adds value to the business.

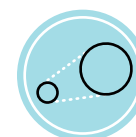


HOW RED HAT CAN HELP:

The ability to quickly provision new systems is central to a nimble and flexible IT infrastructure, which is why Red Hat offers a simple web GUI – with all the power of the command line – that lets your less experienced IT staff perform administrative tasks without full root access. And Red Hat management solutions not only help you manage changes on your Linux systems, they also allow you to log this administrative work for audit purposes.

3. IS OUR ENVIRONMENT SCALABLE TO MEET INCREASING DEMAND?

It's hard to scale your environment when your budget is shrinking. In an economic downturn, IT organizations must find ways to do more with less. If you're still manually creating, managing, and updating system configurations on a system-by-system basis, at least one of your IT professionals is being considerably underutilized.



HOW RED HAT CAN HELP:

Red Hat automates the tasks of systems administration, allowing the typical administrator to manage over 200 Red Hat Enterprise Linux systems. With Red Hat systems management tools, you can group systems together and easily manage thousands of systems as if they were one. Red Hat Satellite's kickstart and provisioning capabilities also let you deploy systems with ease and consistency. Then, Red Hat helps you manage the complete life cycle of your Linux infrastructure with best practices that move systems through the various stages of development, test, and production.

4. ARE WE CONFIDENT THAT OUR SYSTEMS ARE UP-TO-DATE AND PROTECTED AGAINST THE LATEST VULNERABILITIES?

All of your systems need to be up to date with the latest security fixes. And security aside, if you have compliance requirements such as PCI, are you prepared for outside auditors to come into your environment and check your patch levels?



HOW RED HAT CAN HELP:

Red Hat provides tools that automate and centralize systems management. Sync all your systems with Red Hat Network and automatically download all updates for the channels to which you've subscribed. Roll out updates across multiple channels and various system groups. Update and track deployments for machines across development, QA, and production. And if an update doesn't function as expected, you can roll back software configurations just as easily, restoring machines to their previous states with the click of a button.

5. ARE WE USING SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT TO CONTROL OUR OPERATIONAL COSTS?

A good systems management solution should dramatically increase the ratio of servers managed to system administrators. If you need more administrators as you add servers, your systems management solution is likely to blame.



That's because while free open source solutions may not have license or subscription fees, building and supporting any DIY solution has a cost, and it's paid by the organization. Consider the hours spent learning, operating, maintaining, and troubleshooting your systems management solution. The time required to provision multiple systems, update them, patch them, re-deploy them. Too often, highly skilled, highly paid administrators spend far too much time on these relatively low-value, repetitive tasks instead of projects that are strategic to the business.

HOW RED HAT CAN HELP:

With Red Hat systems management, there's minimal need to manage the management tool. So your senior level administrators can be deployed to work on high-value projects while junior level administrators easily provision and update your systems. And the subscription costs are nominal compared to the ongoing operational and support costs of a DIY solution.

6. HOW MUCH OF OUR SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBILITY FALLS ON A FEW – OR EVEN JUST ONE – PERSON?

In most cases, there is little to no documentation of DIY solutions. The lack of documentation makes it difficult to train new people on the solution, let alone administer it in the absence of the architect.



HOW RED HAT CAN HELP:

Red Hat systems management solutions enable your IT team to confidently manage your infrastructure. In addition to online product documentation, Red Hat has a highly regarded customer support team and development community that can be leveraged to answer questions. And unlike many DIY solutions, Red Hat tools allow junior system administrators to patch systems without root access or the command line; senior system administrators can set the appropriate level of administrative permissions for each user of the GUI console to distribute the administrative load.

7. DOES OUR SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT SOLUTION LIMIT OUR ABILITY TO USE NEW TECHNOLOGIES?

Adding technologies like virtualization to your environment can result in significant cost savings due to machine consolidation, reduced power and cooling consumption, better workload management, and other increased efficiencies. But virtualization also increases





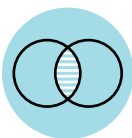
exponentially the number of systems to administer, since you often have many operating system installations on each physical machine. The complexity of managing the added systems can quickly eat up your savings—especially if you're relying on manual management tools.

HOW RED HAT CAN HELP:

With Red Hat systems management, administration of one hundred machines can be as easy as one—whether your servers are deployed on bare metal, virtual guests, or even a mainframe.

8. ARE OUR LINUX SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS DESIGNED TO WORK TOGETHER?

The typical DIY systems management tool is focused on solving a particular problem. Consequently, you often need multiple tools to effectively manage your environment. Since the tools are not well integrated, it's difficult to conduct an audit and have a single view of your infrastructure. Scheduling unattended operations is time consuming and frustrating, as each piece of the solution has to be integrated with all the others.



HOW RED HAT CAN HELP:

Red Hat provides a single management interface across multiple modules for update management, provisioning, configuration management, and monitoring. And we understand that you may have more than just Red Hat Enterprise Linux in your environment; that's why our tools are designed so that data and functionality can be shared with other solutions.

CONCLUSION

It's understandable that few IT teams can answer all of these questions confidently. In tough economic times, IT organizations are necessarily focused on more seemingly critical projects than reconsidering their systems management tools. Nevertheless, with shrinking budgets and rising organizational expectations, a well managed and consistent server environment adds substantial value to the business.

Red Hat systems management solutions bring improved administrator efficiency, performance, and security to the Linux infrastructure.

Learn more at www.redhat.com/systems_management.

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