



5 Steps to a Successful Technology Audit



Digital assets are becoming more and more commonplace. These solutions and the devices they're on are becoming invaluable in the places we live, work and play, but with more adoption comes a new set of challenges for IT departments. Today's IT teams are tasked with managing, securing and optimizing an increasing array of hardware and software across their network infrastructure – all while balancing their own budget limitations and limited resources.

Performing routine technology audits is an invaluable part of managing your assets for cost efficiency and efficacy. From updates to managing software licenses, hardware and other computer assets, audits are a critical aspect of asset management. Knowing what assets you have, how they're used and who is using them is also vital to adhering to IT budgets.

These audits can improve compliance, protect assets, minimize unauthorized installations and provide a blueprint for future upgrades or replacements. However, conducting these audits manually can impose a significant burden on your already thinly-stretched staff. While performing a regular technology audit can greatly improve your asset management, an automated software as a service (SaaS) solution is necessary for long-term success.



The need for automated support

With all of the information needed in an audit, manual input is simply not cost effective or efficient. A manual audit of your IT assets conducted by in-house personnel typically requires technicians to walk through all buildings and sites, finding and confirming each individual IT asset. This inefficiency amplifies the challenges already faced by technology departments in an economic climate where they are expected to accomplish more than ever before, while having fewer resources available to devote to the tasks at hand.

On top of day-to-day requirements, the role of IT is changing. As many organizations become more reliant upon their hardware and software to perform their daily operations, IT teams are now expected to have a more strategic role. The work of almost all departments is directly impacted by the technologies supporting them; if the internet is down, for example, communications are stalled.

With so many projects to take on, an automated technology audit is necessary so that IT teams don't lose productivity and can work toward long-term projects. Having a manual process is simply not a good use of your resources, particularly time and money. In addition, using software to manage IT audits offers benefits in a number of areas:

Human error

An automated audit reduces the chance of a human error due to manual entry or a mistake in the field. You'll get the most accurate data compiled in a central dashboard.

Software management

All software needs to not only be managed for cost effectiveness but needs to also comply with licensing agreements to avoid fines. An automated technology audit solution can discover and monitor all the software on all computers within the organization, then provide the tools for optimum software management.

Proactive IT support

An automated audit system can provide a help desk technician with complete visibility of the BIOS, hardware and software of the IT asset. Technicians can then proactively identify issues before a user has to put in a help desk ticket for servicing, keeping end users and faculty happy and productive.

Security

Effective technology audit automation software will identify all the hardware on the client network and then monitor their locations daily. Your solution can also track the software that's downloaded on devices and restrict specified applications or files before they harm the asset. If someone installs unauthorized software or unapproved software, an incident report is immediately generated and routed to appropriate personnel for evaluation and corrective action. In addition, viruses and malware which can compromise network security are quickly identified.

Strategic planning / emerging trends

With real-time data on all of your assets, you'll be able to discover trends and develop plans for the future. For example: Do you see that a specific type of tablet has numerous tickets with costly repairs? It may be time to make the case for a more expensive yet more reliable replacement.

How to get started with audit software

As with any software, not all solutions are created the same. To find the best product to meet your needs, follow these five steps as you complete your evaluation:

Step 1: Look for a SaaS Solution

SaaS, or software as a service, solutions are cloud-based, so that maintenance is provided by the vendor. This means a faster time to implementation, lower upfront costs and the ability to access the solution from wherever technicians are in the field.

Another added benefit of a cloud-based solution is that you'll see faster time to value as you'll have little downtime during implementation. Vendors are responsible for this process as well as any ongoing maintenance. Any updates or patches that are necessary for keeping your software up and running are also automatically installed.

Step 2: Work with Your Vendor for Implementation and Data Management

Ensure that your software vendor can import your existing data as well as work with you to collect any asset information that may not currently be tracked. In addition to this information, your vendor should collect and import any and all ranges of IP addresses that enter your network. If more addresses are added, your vendor should provide a user-friendly means for adding them to your system.

An agentless solution, like Brightly's Insight™, tracks and inventories all IP-addressable assets on your hosted network. These solutions are even more efficient as they don't require an agent to be installed on each individual piece of hardware.

When it comes to users, your vendor should make their product available to an unlimited number of your staff. This provides you with maximum flexibility in determining who will have access, rather than being limited by an arbitrary licensing count. When you have a solution in place, consider asking for onsite training from your provider so that your employees are ready.

Step 3: Appoint a Champion

For your implementation of technology audit automation to succeed, an internal project manager should serve as the liaison between your team and your vendor. This person should also serve as the main internal advocate for the project. They must constantly raise the project's profile, be a fierce supporter and continually emphasize the benefits of technology audits and the automation process to your stakeholders.

Step 4: Continuously Collect Data

After selecting and implementing your technology audit automation solution, develop a technology baseline by conducting audits in all departments on a set schedule. These audits will establish current capacity and provide support when additional resources are needed. Areas operating with substandard or outdated hardware can be quickly pinpointed and targeted as refresh strategies are developed. Audits can also determine if software is being used in accordance with all licensing agreements.

You should do these at least once a year, but we recommend doing more if possible. Remember: The more often you perform an audit, the more likely you are to proactively catch problems before they arise and have the most up-to-date information.

Step 5: Assess, Evaluate and Improve

After your baseline has been established, review the reports provided by your system. They should offer a blueprint for areas which you can target for improvement. Whether you are on the lookout for unlicensed software, attempting to head off potential hardware problems, or working to comply with regulatory requirements, your IT audit management solution should provide you with reports that are easy to generate and full of actionable data.



Conclusion

As you're going through the process, you can find areas for improvement outside of just your devices as well. Maybe you've discovered that your appointed champion has an even bigger role to play in key decision-making, or maybe you've found that a team effort is best. Whatever you choose to do, it should be with the goals of preserving your resources and protecting your investments.

Brightly's Technology Management suite has solutions for all of your IT team's needs. The powerful asset inventory tool, InsightTM, is agentless and accurately collects data from all IP-addressable assets. Regardless of who is using the devices, you can capture a total picture of the investment and begin to make better decisions based on data. From license allocation (Is everyone using licenses equally?) to ensuring that all software is updated, your team has everything they need to ensure their audits provide you with actionable insights.

Organizations today simply can't afford the repercussions of not conducting regular technology audits, and manual processes put you at risk for the following:

- Diverting human resources from critical and more impactful projects
- Introducing vulnerabilities to security and raising the risk of human error
- Undermining your department's SLAs
- Increasing the risk of inaccurate or expired information polluting your decision-making

Automated technology audits can eliminate the expense and errors of manual audits, automatically manage your software licensing and hardware deployment, improve the security of your technology investment and help you comply with applicable fiduciary regulations. In today's environment and budget-conscious climate, a technology audit automation solution is an essential element of your technology plan.

About Brightly Software

Brightly, the global leader in intelligent asset management solutions, enables organizations to transform the performance of their assets. Brightly's sophisticated cloud-based platform leverages more than 20 years of data to deliver predictive insights that help users through the key phases of the entire asset lifecycle. More than 12,000 clients of every size worldwide depend on Brightly's complete suite of intuitive software – including CMMS, EAM, Strategic Asset Management, IoT Remote Monitoring, Sustainability and Community Engagement. Paired with award-winning training, support and consulting services, Brightly helps light the way to a bright future with smarter assets and sustainable communities. For more information, visit brightlysoftware.com

