App stores or online asset request systems are a win-win. They present a great opportunity to automate ITAM, alleviate the ITAM team of customer facing admin whilst providing a better experience to customers.

Best of all, we can bake in our governance and policy requirements into the system so our ITAM goals are automatically met.

This article will cover some of the reasons to consider an automated asset request fulfillment system and features to consider when implementing.

**Why consider automated request fulfillment?**

First of all, app stores are fast and efficient. Just like the experience with smart phones, I can order assets at 3am in my pyjamas, I get immediate acknowledgement and don’t need to speak to anyone to get the job done.

Asset Managers and Service Desk Managers can think long and hard about how to implement the best possible service – and then implement it in a repeatable automated fashion so that it is a great experience every time.

Other reasons to consider automated asset request systems:

- An opportunity to speed up deliver and meet SLA for requests
- To relieve the asset team of processing requests and get on with more strategic work
- Reduction in non-standard assets and less variation between assets – by steering users towards a specific menu of options – assets are easier to secure, easier to support, easier to license, easier to manage all round.
- Automated management approval facilitates departmental charging / show back
- Re-harvest and reclaim as quickly as you deliver – automated request systems can reverse the whole process to save money.

Users with a fast and efficient service:

- Get a great first impression of IT, often the shop window for IT services
- Are less likely to source their assets from elsewhere (Grey/ShadowIT) if they get a great experience (See Hershey delivering quicker than Amazon [http://www.itassetmanagement.net/2015/08/26/podcast-world-class-itam-hershey-company/](http://www.itassetmanagement.net/2015/08/26/podcast-world-class-itam-hershey-company/))
- Are more likely to give up assets for reuse if they know it’s a great experience to get it back again when they need it (e.g. A line manager will hoard a laptop under their desk if they think it’s going to be a protracted process to get it back when they need it).
Policy Considerations / Approaches

- Implement a re-use before buy policy (Squeeze best value out of existing before buying) – good asset request systems should facilitate this.
- Separate the concept of request from entitlement. Many asset request systems can check license availability on the fly – this is great but is a bit of a lottery for the user. Why should one user get an asset free because there happens to be a surplus at that time? Why not charge for all requests and accrue surpluses (charging users when a surplus asset exists) as profit for the ITAM team?
- Just because you bought a perpetual license or annual subscription doesn’t mean you have to provide this to the user – allow them to lease it for shorter periods, or request it back if not in use for a demonstrable length of time (say 3 months / 90 days).
- Consider tactical re-harvesting campaigns using your request system for removal of high value applications – good tools should facilitate this

Finally, consider your architecture for delivering the asset request system. Users typically don’t want many different systems to login to for IT – many organizations embed asset request into ITSM request fulfillment and incident management systems.

ITAM Tools can either embed themselves into ITSM solutions so that whilst the user thinks they are using one pane of glass, they are actually using an ITAM tool embedded within the Service Desk. Alternatively other ITAM tools provide the ITAM plumbing behind the scenes whilst the service desk itself executes all workflow requirements.

Buyers Guide – features to consider:

- Cost visibility – even if you don’t charge internally for software, make users aware of the cost of software so they value it as an asset.
- Social feedback – allow users to provide feedback on software to help your users make better choices
- Cheaper alternatives / guidance – guide the user to the correct application for their actual usage – e.g. guide them to a viewer if that is all they need.
- Availability by role / territory – a good request system will provide access to a request catalogue items dependent on their role.
- Modern asset request systems allow users to manage their own entitlement and help users to help the company. Much like a personal app store on a smart phone, they can login and see their entitlements and give assets back that are no longer required.

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