## TEST REPORT AUGUST 2009



## **Executive summary**

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Dell Inc. (Dell) commissioned Principled Technologies (PT) to compare the operating system deployment times when using the following two system management applications:

- Dell<sup>™</sup> Unified Server Configurator (Dell USC) version 1.1 enabled by the Lifecycle Controller (running on the Dell<sup>™</sup> PowerEdge<sup>™</sup> R710 server)
- HP SmartStart (SmartStart) version 8.25 x64 (running on the HP ProLiant DL380 G6 server)

We tested these system management applications, which provide ease of use for end users as they perform various server tasks, on similarly configured servers.

We tested the Dell USC version 1.1 with operating system driver pack 6.1.1.3, a pre-release version Dell plans to release in the third quarter of 2009, and the HP SmartStart system management application version 8.25 x64. We determined the time these applications took to perform the following tasks:

- Setting the NIC boot options for NIC 1
- Setting the serial communication options
- Deploying Windows Server 2008 Enterprise Edition x64 SP2

The Dell Unified Server Configurator provides a single interface for firmware and other updates, hardware configuration, RAID management, native deployment of supported operating systems, and system diagnostics.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- The Dell USC was 34.6 percent faster than HP SmartStart at deploying Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64 SP2. (See Figure 1.)
- The Dell USC was 56.2 percent faster than HP SmartStart at deploying Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64 SP2 in a firsttime deployment where, in the HP case, the user had to first download and create a SmartStart CD. (See Figure 2.)
- The Dell USC was able to perform all our tasks without any other utilities. HP SmartStart required two additional utilities to perform the same tasks. (See Figure 3.)
- The Dell USC required 33 steps to deploy Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64 SP2, while HP SmartStart required 35 steps for a normal deployment and 38 steps for a first-time deployment when the user had to first download and create a SmartStart CD. (See Figure 4.)
- The Dell USC's unified interface also provides several benefits that are less easily measured. Among these are simplified upgrade and rollback paths, which do not depend on keeping track of external media.

Because the Dell USC is on an embedded chip, no compact discs (CDs) are necessary. We used SmartStart 8.25 x64 for installing the operating system on the HP server. Unlike the Dell USC, SmartStart is a CD-based utility. However, we could not execute all management tasks using SmartStart. To set the NIC 1 boot option and Serial Communication, we had to boot to the ROM-Based Setup Utility (RBSU). We compare the summary deployment times when we used the Dell Unified Server Configurator to those when we used SmartStart and BIOS-based utilities. See the Test results section for complete results and a description of the comparison. For complete test system configuration information, see Appendix A; for more detailed test information, see Appendix B.

Figure 1 shows the times required to deploy Microsoft Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64 SP2. The Dell USC using OS driver pack 6.1.1.3 on the Dell PowerEdge R710 took 28 minutes and 14 seconds to complete the deployment. This is 34.6 percent faster than SmartStart 8.25 x64 on the HP ProLiant DL380 G6, which took 43 minutes and 12 seconds to perform the same tasks.

Normal deployment: System management application and server	Dell USC OS driver pack version 6.1.1.3 on Dell PowerEdge R710	HP SmartStart 8.25 x64 on HP ProLiant DL380 G6
Total time required	28:14	43:12

Figure 1: Time for normal deployment. Times are in minutes:seconds. Shorter times are better.

We also considered the case of a user who does not have the latest version of SmartStart available due to misplacing the CD or due to an outdated CD. We found that the time to locate, download, and burn a SmartStart 8.25 x64 CD would add a one-time cost of over 21 minutes to the time required for our deployment test, and would add three additional steps to the procedure. We call this case the first-time deployment. This issue would never arise for the Dell PowerEdge R710 because Dell integrates the USC in the server. There is no CD required hence no possibility of a misplaced CD. If an update is required, the USC updates directly via FTP. As Figure 2 shows, the deployment time using SmartStart increased from 43:12 to 64:28, an increase of 21:16. Be aware, however, that download times can vary considerably.

First-time deployment: System management application and server	Dell USC OS driver pack version 6.1.1.3 on Dell PowerEdge R710	HP SmartStart 8.25 x64 on HP ProLiant DL380 G6
Total time required	28:14	64:28

Figure 2: Time for first-time deployment. Times are in minutes:seconds. Shorter times are better. Note: First-time deployment assumes an up-to-date copy of SmartStart is not available.

Figure 3 shows the number of utilities we had to use to accomplish our tasks. The Dell USC using OS driver pack 6.1.1.3 on the Dell PowerEdge R710 was the only utility we needed to use. SmartStart 8.25 x64 on the HP ProLiant DL380 G6 requires the RBSU and Array Configuration Utility (ACU) to perform the same tasks.

Dell PowerEdge R710 (1 utility)	HP DL380 G6 (3 utilities, requiring 1 CD)	
Dell USC version 1.1 (integrated)	RBSU SmartStart 8.25 x64 (CD)	
	ACU (invoked from inside SmartStart 8.25 x64)	

Figure 3: Number of utilities required by each server.

Figure 4 shows the number of steps required to execute both the normal deployment and the first-time deployment test cases.

Test Case	Dell USC OS driver pack version 6.1.1.3 on Dell PowerEdge R710	HP SmartStart 8.25 x64 on HP ProLiant DL380 G6
Normal Deployment	33	35
First-time Deployment	33	38

Figure 4: The number of steps required on each server for the deployment.

There are also less-measurable benefits of the Dell USC over the HP management utilities. The Dell USC provides a single, easy-to-use interface for server management tasks, while HP employs multiple tools. The Dell USC also provides a more repeatable upgrade/downgrade path. The Dell USC, for instance, stores a copy of the old BIOS or firmware before applying a new version. You can accomplish a rollback later using only the Dell USC. HP requires you to have a copy of the old BIOS ROMPaq to complete such a rollback. If a copy of the ROMPaq is not available, you must find and download a copy. This extra time can be significant in large production environments where every minute of downtime results in considerable costs to the business. The Dell USC also has a single automated download location coded into the utility on each machine. This simplifies future server upgrades, including BIOS updates and firmware, as well as Dell USC platform updates. The Dell USC also requires no inserting of CDs or USB keys for the deployment; this media independence and automated functionality of the Dell USC help to avoid version skew, time delays, and other problems associated with CD-based media.

## **Test results**

In this section, we give detailed steps and times required for the deployments.

## Normal deployment

On the Dell PowerEdge R710, we used the Dell USC version 1.1 for all tasks in this section of the report. On the HP ProLiant DL380 G6, we used SmartStart8.25 x64 and the ROM-Based Setup Utility (RBSU). All times in this section are in minutes:seconds.

For the Dell PowerEdge R710, we used the Dell USC to install Microsoft Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64SP2. Before starting the test, we deleted any preexisting RAID configurations.

For the HP ProLiant DL380 G6, we used SmartStart to install Microsoft Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64 SP2. Before starting the test, we deleted any preexisting RAID configurations. We pressed the Escape key during the boot to prevent the creation of a default RAID.

At the end of the install, both servers boot into the operating system. We stopped the timers at the Windows prompt to change the password. Figure 5 shows the times for each step in the normal deployment.

Dell USC OS driver pack version 6.1.1.3 on Dell PowerEdge R71		HP SmartStart 8.25 x64 on HP ProLiant DL380 G6	
1:49	Power on the server and boot to Dell USC by pressing F10.	1:48	Power on the server and boot to SmartStart CD 8.25 x64.
0:34	Use the menus to set the first NIC Boot Protocol to PXE and the Serial Communication option to "On with Console redirection via COM1."	0:20	Using the menus, set the NIC1 boot option to Network Boot and the BIOS Serial & EMS option to "COM1;IRQ4; IO:3F8H-3FFH."
N/A		4:18	Press ESC to reboot the server and boot to SmartStart CD 8.25 x64.
0:32	Select Deploy OS from the menu option and follow the array configuration.	1:00	Click through the menus to server deployment Launch the Array Configuration Utility (ACU) and configure the array.
0:58	Complete the remaining steps, selecting Windows Server 2008 x64 as the operating system. Insert the Windows Server 2008 x64 SP2 DVD.	4:18	Continue through setup, selecting Microsoft Windows Server 2008, Enterprise Edition as the OS option setup. Insert the Windows Server 2008 x64 SP2 DVD.
24:21	Allow Windows install to complete, answering any prompts. Stop the timer at the prompt to change the password.	31:28	Allow Windows install to complete, answering any prompts. Stop the timer at the prompt to change the password.
28:14	Total time	43:12	Total time

Figure 5: Time for normal deployment. Times are in minutes:seconds. Shorter times are better.

**First-time deployment** The first-time deployment case is identical to the normal deployment case in all regards, except the creation of a new SmartStart CD. Figure 6 shows the times for each step in the first-time deployment.

Dell USC OS driver pack version 6.1.1.3 on Dell PowerEdge R71		HP SmartStart 8.25 x64 on HP ProLiant DL380 G6	
N/A		2:55	Locate and browse to SmartStart 8.25 download
N/A		11:33	Download SmartStart 8.25
N/A		6:48	Burn the SmartStart 8.25 download to a CD
1:49	Power on the server and boot to Dell USC by pressing F10.	1:48	Power on the server and boot to SmartStart CD 8.25 x64.
0:34	Use the menus to set the first NIC Boot Protocol to PXE and the Serial Communication option to "On with Console redirection via COM1."	0:20	Using the menus, set the NIC1 boot option to Network Boot and the BIOS Serial & EMS option to "COM1;IRQ4; IO:3F8H-3FFH."
N/A		4:18	Press ESC to reboot the server and boot to SmartStart CD 8.25 x64.
0:32	Select Deploy OS from the menu option and follow the array configuration.	1:00	Click through the menus to server deployment Launch the Array Configuration Utility (ACU) and configure the array.
0:58	Complete the remaining steps, selecting Windows Server 2008 x64 as the operating system. Insert the Windows Server 2008 x64 SP2 DVD.	4:18	Continue through setup, selecting Microsoft Windows Server 2008, Enterprise Edition as the OS option setup. Insert the Windows Server 2008 x64 SP2 DVD.
24:21	Allow Windows install to complete, answering any prompts. Stop the timer at the prompt to change the password.	31:28	Allow Windows install to complete, answering any prompts. Stop the timer at the prompt to change the password.
28:14	Total time	64:28	Total time

Figure 6: Time for normal deployment. Times are in minutes:seconds. Shorter times are better.

# Appendix A – Test system configuration information This appendix provides detailed configuration information about each of the test server systems, which we list in

alphabetical order in Figure 7.

Servers	Dell PowerEdge R710	HP ProLiant DL380 G6		
General dimension information				
Height (inches)	3.50	3.39		
Width (inches)	17.50	17.53		
Depth (inches)	27.00	25.81		
U size in server rack (U)	2	2		
Power supplies	•			
Total number	2	2		
Wattage of each (W)	570	460		
Cooling fans	•			
Total number	5	6		
Dimensions (h x w) of each	2.50" x 2.50"	2.38" x 2.50"		
Voltage (V)	12	12		
Amps (A)	1.60	2.45		
General processor setup				
Number of processor packages	2	2		
Number of cores per processor package	4	4		
Number of hardware threads per core	2	2		
CPU				
Vendor	Intel	Intel		
Name	Xeon E5540	Xeon E5540		
Stepping	D0	D0		
Socket type	LGA1366	LGA1366		
Core frequency (GHz)	2.53	2.53		
L1 cache	4 x 32 KB + 32 KB	4 x 32 KB + 32 KB		
L2 cache	4 x 256 KB	4 x 256 KB		
L3 cache (MB)	8	8		
Platform				
Vendor and model number	Dell PowerEdge R710	HP ProLiant DL380 G6		
Motherboard model number	0M233H	PADAB0G9VXC1CQ		
Motherboard revision number	13	0G		
BIOS name and version	Dell 1.1.4 (05/08/2009)	HP BIOS P62 (06/20/2009)		
BIOS settings	Memory Operating Mode set to Optimizer Mode	Advanced Memory Protection set to Advanced ECC Support		
Memory modules				
Total RAM in system (GB)	12	12		
Vendor and model number	Samsung M393B5673DZ1	Samsung M393B5673DZ1		
Туре	PC3-10600R DDR3	PC3-10600R DDR3		
Speed (MHz)	1,333	1,333		

Principled Technologies, Inc.: Time comparison for OS deployment: Dell Unified Server Configurator version 1.1 vs. HP SmartStart version 8.25 x64

Servers	Dell PowerEdge R710	HP ProLiant DL380 G6	
Speed in the system currently running @ (MHz)	1,066	1,066	
Timing/latency (tCL-tRCD-iRP-tRASmin)	7-7-7-37.5	7-7-7-37.5	
Size (GB)	12	12	
Number of RAM modules	6 x 2 GB	6 x 2 GB	
Chip organization	Double-sided	Double-sided	
Hard disk			
Vendor and model number	Fujitsu MBB2147RC	Fujitsu MBB2147RC	
Number of disks in system	5	5	
Size (GB)	146	146	
Buffer size (MB)	16	16	
RPM	10,000	10,000	
Туре	SAS	SAS	
Operating system		•	
Name	Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64 SP2 without Hyper-V	Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64 SP2 without Hyper-V	
Build number	6001	6001	
File system	NTFS	NTFS	
Language	English	English	
Network card/subsystem			
Vendor and model number	Broadcom NetXtreme II 5709C Dual-Port Ethernet	Broadcom NetXtreme II 5709C Dual-Port Ethernet	
Туре	Integrated	Integrated	
Optical drive			
Vendor and model number	TSSTcorp TS-L333A DVD-ROM	LG GDR-D20N DVD-ROM	
USB ports			
Number	4	4	
Туре	2.0	2.0	

Figure 7: Detailed system configuration information for the two test servers.

## Appendix B – Detailed test information

This appendix provides detailed information about how we conducted the tests. As we discuss in the Executive summary section of this report, the process of replacing a mislaid or out-of-date SmartStart CD would add the following three steps to configuring the HP DL380 G6. However, in a case where you are installing on multiple servers, you would only incur the cost of creating the CD once.

- 1. Browse to the SmartStart download page.
- 2. Download SmartStart 8.25 x64.
- 3. Burn SmartStart to a CD.

Figure 8 details the steps we used to deploy Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64 SP2.

Dell PowerEdge R710 (33 steps, requiring 4 reboots)	HP DL380 G6 (35 steps, requiring 5 reboots)		
Before starting this case, delete any pre-existing RAID	Before starting this case, delete any pre-existing RAID		
configurations that may exist.	configurations that may exist.		
Start of timed test: Start the timer.	Start of timed test: Start the timer.		
1. Turn on the server.	1. Turn on the server, and insert the SmartStart		
<ol><li>Push F10 when the BIOS screen prompts you to</li></ol>	CD.		
do so. The server will boot into the Dell USC	2. Push F9 when the BIOS prompts you to enter		
GUI.	RBSU. (See note 2 below.)		
3. Select Hardware Configuration.	3. At the ROM-Based Setup Utility screen, select		
4. Select Advanced Configuration.	System Options.		
5. At the Advanced Configuration screen, select	4. Select Embedded NICs.		
the first NIC card in the list.	5. Select NIC1 Boot Options.		
6. At the Main Page screen, select MBA	6. Press Enter to clear the warning.		
Configuration Menu.	7. Select Network Boot, and press Enter.		
7. Select PXE as the Boot Protocol, and click	8. Press ESC twice to return to the main menu.		
Back.	9. Select BIOS Serial Console & EMS, and		
8. At the Main Page screen, click Finish.	press Enter.		
9. When you see the message box asking you to	10. Select BIOS Serial Console Port, and press		
confirm your changes, click Yes.	Enter.		
10. Select System BIOS Settings.	11. Select COM1; IRQ4; IO: 3F8H-3FFH, and		
11. Select Senal Communication.	press Enter.		
12. Under the Senal Communication, choose On with Canada Dediraction via COM1, and click	12. Press ESC to return to the main menu.		
	ross ESC to exit, and, upon commation,		
Daux. 12 Click Finish At the nen up measure to confirm	14. Dress F10 to complete the process.		
rs. Click Finish. At the pop-up message to confirm	the BAID. It will best into SmartStart from the		
14. When you see the message bey asking you to			
robect click No. (See note 1 below.)	15 At the Select the language to use during the		
15 Click Back	Smart Start Process screen, accent the		
16. Select OS Denloy on the left	default of English, and click Continue		
17 Select OS deploy	16 Accent the license agreement by clicking		
18 At the RAID Configuration screen (Step 1 of 5)	Aaree		
click Next	17 Ignore the warning about there being no		
19 At the RAID Configuration screen (Step 2 of 5)	bootable drive. Click Deploy Server		
accept the default of PERC 6/i Integrated. Click	18 Click Launch ACU and ADU		
Next	19 Using the dropdown list in the upper left		
20 At the RAID Configuration screen (Step 3 of 5)	corner select Smart Array P410i in		
accept the default of Express Wizard. Click	Embedded Slot.		
Next.	20. Click the Wizards tab, and click Express		
21. At the RAID Configuration screen (Step 4 of 5).	Configuration, in the right-hand pane.		
select the RAID level of RAID 5. Accept all other	21. Click Begin.		

defaults. Click Next

- 22. At the RAID Configuration screen (Step 1 of 5), click Finish.
- 23. At the Do you wish to apply these modifications now? message box, click Yes.
- 24. At the RAID configuration successful screen, click OK, and wait while the Dell USC populates the OS list.
- 25. At the Operating System Deployment screen (Step 1 of 3), select Windows Server 2008 x64. Click Next, and wait while the Dell USC populates the drivers for the OS.
- 26. At the Operating System Deployment screen (Step 2 of 3), insert the Windows Server 2008 x64 with SP2 DVD, and click Next.
- 27. At the Operating System Deployment screen (Step 3 of 3), click Finish.
- 28. After the system reboots, at the Install Windows screen, accept the default Language, Time and currency format, and Keyboard or input Method. Click Next.
- 29. At the next Install Windows screen, click Install now.
- 30. At the next Install Windows screen, select Windows Server 2008 Enterprise (Full Installation). Click Next.
- 31. Accept the license agreement, and click Next.
- 32. Select Custom (Advanced) by clicking on it.
- 33. You should see only one partition available for installing Windows Server 2008. Accept that as the default, and click Next.

End of timed test: At the notice to change the password, stop the timer.

- 22. Accept the default of RAID 5, and click Next.
- 23. Click Finish when you see the Configuration Wizard Complete message. It will save the configuration automatically.
- 24. Click Exit ACU.
- 25. At the Server Deployment Hardware Configuration screen, click Continue.
- At the Server Deployment Operating System Selection screen, expand the list for Windows Server 2008, and choose Microsoft Windows Server 2008, Enterprise Edition. Click Continue.
- 27. At the Server Deployment Operating System Media Source screen, accept the defaults, and click Continue.
- At the Server Deployment Disk Partitioning Options screen, accept the defaults, and click Continue.
- 29. At the Server Deployment Operating System Configuration Information screen, enter the Organization name and the license key, and click Continue.
- At the Server Deployment WBEM/SNMP Configuration screen, select No for both, and click Continue.
- 31. At the Server Deployment ProLiant Support Pack screen, accept the default of Express, and click Continue.
- 32. At the Server Deployment Ready to Install screen, click Continue, and wait while SmartStart prepares the disks.
- 33. When SmartStart prompts you, remove the SmartStart CD, and insert the Windows DVD for Windows Server 2008 x64 with SP2. Click Continue.
- At the Server Deployment Browse Media screen, click Browse, and select DVD. Click Continue.

35. Accept the license agreement, and click Next. End of timed test: At the notice to change the password, stop the timer.

Figure 8: Number of steps required by each server to deploy Windows Server 2008 Enterprise x64.

Note 1: As per the Dell USC User's Manual: "Depending on the configuration setting changes, you may receive a message indicating "One or more of the settings requires a reboot to be saved and activated. Do you want to reboot now?" It is acceptable to select "No" and continue to make additional configuration changes or perform other tasks such as OS Deployment. All changes will be activated during the following system boot." We assume the user is familiar enough with server setup tasks to know this reboot is not necessary.

Note 2: For our analysis, we assume the user is perceptive enough to not boot into SmartStart to get into the RBSU. The user could, however, boot into SmartStart first and then invoke the RBSU. This would add several minutes to the install time. We did not analyze this case.

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Principled Technologies, Inc. 1007 Slater Rd., Suite 250 Durham, NC 27703 www.principledtechnologies.com info@principledtechnologies.com

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