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Reflective paper #2

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This week I was tasked with finding a way of tracking assets within our organization. The current methodology being used was an excel spreadsheet kept on the local drive of the network engineer’s laptop. The spread sheet was then passed around through email and edited without edit or version control. This obviously led to a lot of confusion regarding incoming assets as well as the current owner of company assets. When I was first asked to find a solution, I was very lost. At first, I looked at creating some sort of custom excel spreadsheet with input sheets, fonts and color schemes.

The “new” spreadsheet would reside on our corporate SharePoint and be accessible to all. Again, this would be a nightmare scenario, with the only fix being access control and cloud save location. After some time wasted over a cup of coffee, I decided to use the System Administrator chat room on reddit.com. I used search terms like “asset management” and “inventory control”. I was very happy to start learning about custom build systems for asset management. My search lead me to Snipe-IT Asset Management.

Snipe-IT is an open source, web hosted asset manager. As a security company, SPARQ is very averse to using foreign sourced software. Snipe-IT is based in Silicon Valley and has a very active development team with extensive documentation and dev blogs. As an open source project, Snipe-IT creates revenue by offering enterprise support, hosting and migration services. There is a free tier that requires self-hosting and no support outside of documentation and a few YouTube channels. Due to our small size and ability to self-host, I was able to implement the software in our company. In addition to the free tier, Snipe-IT brings a suite of features that make It invaluable in an enterprise system regardless of size.

Of note is the user account access control, ability to “check out” equipment to users, track the life of licenses with email alerts, report creation, ease of adding/changing or deleting assets and the ability to have multiple users using the system with non-repudiation.

The install steps are relatively simple to follow with a few configurations that need use case specific information. This was the first time I had ever deployed a production server or a hosted website. I started by requesting a Virtual Machine from our Security Architect. He gave me an Ubuntu 18 server with 15 GB hard drive, 1 Gigabyte of memory and 2 CPU. Using a command line only system was confusing and frustrating for the first time. After setting up the VM OS, I got to work updating the OS, adding the Snipe-IT repository, installing the dependent packages and Snipe-IT. I then deployed the website, granted admin accounts to key personnel in my department and started migrating the spreadsheets into a CVS and into Snipe-IT.

Working on this project gave me a since of purpose, confidence and helped me over come my fear of working in server installs of Linux. Additionally, it granted me a win early in my internship and help cement my work ethic to my team. It was a great experience to overcome technical difficulties, a sense of self-doubt and a feeling of not being an asset at my company.