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App Lifecycle Management in Education: Simplify with automation

Modern classrooms are digital classrooms. As you integrate technology into the learning process, it is crucial to strike a balance between providing easy access to the tools that educators and students want and ensuring the security and safety they need.

The role of IT is to help make the classroom a better and more secure learning environment, including how students can interact with devices and technology throughout their day.

One of the key challenges for any IT admin is **app management.** Apps used in education are important learning and teaching tools. But the sheer number of apps available can be overwhelming to keep track of, not to mention need a screening process to ensure:

- Apps are useful and compliant
- No duplication of already available tools
- No hidden charges
- A need by actual end users
- Apps are part of the school curriculum
 and digital plan

It can be helpful to use a committee approach for app selection to look at broader issues:

- What impact will the app have?
- How will it change current approaches?
- Will training be required?

This can be further divided by a discussion of **core apps** (functional apps used by all) versus **support apps** (apps that connect users to information).

From an IT standpoint, beyond assessing the number of applications in use, it's critical to consider the full app lifecycle from sourcing to onboarding, managing, maintaining and sunsetting each application as needed.

Managing each of these apps throughout the course of their lifespan is known as **App Lifecycle Management**.

By creating a strategy that considers how to approach each step of the app lifecycle workflow, IT can deliver a flawless experience for end users while keeping an eye on compatibility issues and security risks that come with outdated software.

This paper explains:

- Why App Lifecycle Management matters
- The basics of updating and deploying apps
- Why you should patch software
- App Installers in Jamf
- Patch Management with Jamf

Why App Lifecycle Management Matters

Every school or university should have some kind of app strategy. These app strategies are unique to the needs and workflows of every educational institution and aim to improve three major areas: **security posture**, **compliance**, and end user productivity.

By examining your app strategy through the entire lifecycle of apps and understanding how it influences your institution, you can offer end users the best experience while constructing the application infrastructure necessary for your school's success.

Incomplete lifecycle management risks negatively impacting in a multitude of ways, from issues at the individual app level to problems compounded across the entire institution. An inability to pull insights from app usage frequently leads to unnecessary app clutter, while unused apps are a waste of educational dollars. Additionally, pulling app usage reports provides insights into apps that need updates. Having outdated applications on users' devices creates potential vulnerabilities, risking exposure on a far greater level. In addition to security risks on the devices itself, these outdated apps are unreliable when it comes to functioning as intended. When users can't reliably depend on their apps and software, it impacts their experience and inhibits their motivation to invest themselves in the workflows that a well-run device can offer.

When a situation like this arises, it's more likely that many people are facing these obstacles to productivity, versus it being a one-off situation. This means you could have educators and students alike suffering through bad experiences, disrupting learning and affecting educational outcomes, including lost class time, or worse, apprehension from instructors to use their devices to elevate learning opportunities.

Let's take a look at each part of the lifecycle a little closer, and the options admins have for managing applications:



Basics of updating and deploying apps

While lifecycle stages like **sourcing**, **hosting** or **user experience** are important to any strategy, much of an application's lifecycle is spent **updating and deploying** that app. Volume Purchasing through Apple School Manager automatically updates apps as new versions become available (this is the process for iPad, iOS and Mac), however, many applications used may come from outside the Mac App Store, like Google Chrome or the Adobe Suite. For these apps, a little more work is needed to update and deploy.

Patch management is the process of updating these apps and, while necessary, can be a time-consuming and manual task for IT admins. First, let's talk about why patch management is necessary for software environments.

Why should you patch software?

Updating software to take advantage of new features requested by users.

Major (and minor) point-releases of software often bring new features, which users are likely to request well before IT has been made aware of any such pointrelease.

Updating software to take advantage of bug fixes can decrease the number of tickets submitted to IT support teams.

While users appreciate new features being added to applications, system administrators also appreciate a less bug-ridden environment, decreasing the ticket workload of IT support teams.

Updating software to quickly respond to security vulnerabilities.

This ServiceNow study found that it takes 43 days for a cyberattack to be attempted once a patch for a security vulnerability has been released, with 60% of survey respondents who experienced a data breach reporting the breach may have been avoided had the relevant patch been applied.

Investing in a purpose-built, education security solution will help prevent and identify cyberattacks, but it's also critically important to include a strong patch management process in your layers of defense.

Why doesn't everyone immediately patch software?

The same ServiceNow study found that the common reasons for a delay in patching were:

- A lack of available or usable resources needed for patching
- No single view of installed applications and devices
- No ability to schedule downtime for patching

Luckily, Jamf School can assist on all three fronts.

Automated patch workflows with App Installers

One method of keeping apps up-to-date is with automated updates. App Installers, part of the Jamf App Catalog, offers a streamlined way to deploy and update third-party Mac applications, removing the tedious tasks of sourcing, deploying and maintaining application titles.



How App Installers keeps apps up-to-date automatically

App Store and vendor-sourced apps in one place

The App Store was revolutionary when it created a marketplace of applications a user may want on their device and it carries a simple update process that you probably use for your iOS or iPadOS apps. Jamf makes sourcing both Mac App Store and third-party applications easy via the Jamf App Catalog. App Installers offers a simplified "automatic update" workflow, meaning updating apps has a low maintenance point.

STEP 1:

Automatically Source, Host and Package apps

Jamf monitors and sources new versions of apps directly from the vendor. Once a new version is available, Jamf downloads the new version, repackages if needed and uploads it to the distribution point.

The results of powerful automated App updates include:

- Streamlined timelines
- Less downtime
- Easier staff training and awareness

STEP 2:

App security through packaging

The new app version will be deployed automatically to all compatible Macs in the Smart Group designated by the admin. This install is silent in the background, so users do not need to take any action.



Simplified app management with Jamf

Maintaining a healthy application environment – especially keeping apps up-to-date – is a vital part of an IT admins job. Whether using an automated process with App Installers or manually updating titles via patch management, it's never been easier to source, deploy and update applications with Jamf.

And we know, as technology adoption grows, so does the need for easier app management.

To meet your needs, no matter your deployment size or scope, the power of our App Installers works in both Jamf School and Jamf Pro. So whether you're managing the smallest K-12 school or a massive educational institution, Jamf has you covered across the Apple device ecosystem.

And this is just the beginning. Jamf continues to invest in new workflows to help IT admins be successful with Application Lifecycle Management, for every software environment.

To learn more and put our App Lifecycle Management

workflows to the test, start your free trial today.

Or contact your preferred reseller of Apple hardware to get started.