Certero PowerStudio power management software

Easy to use software that can apply power-saving profiles to large workgroups

Helping to save the planet, and some money in the process, isn't that difficult: just switch off desktop PCs when they're not being used.

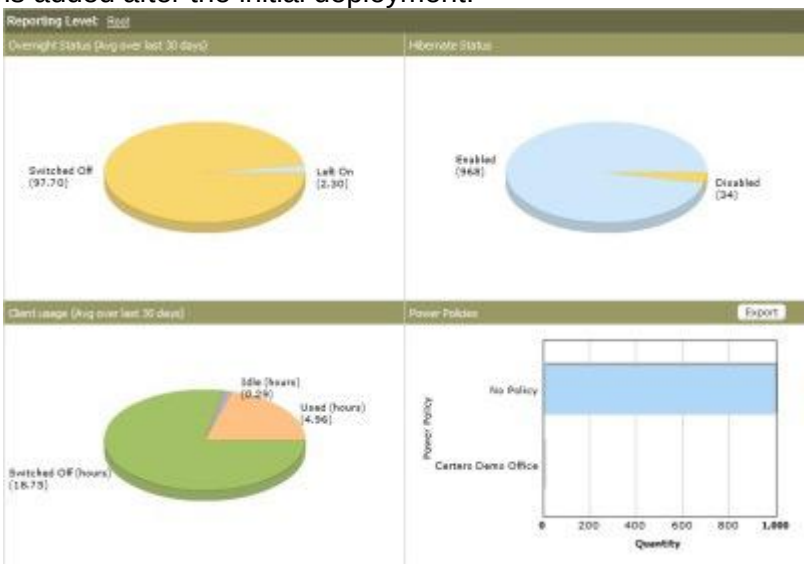
Certero PowerStudio™ aims to help out, by enforcing PC power saving policies across an entire organisation to reduce carbon footprints and slash bills. Comprising separate server and client components, PowerStudio™ requires Windows Server 2003 or later; the only other pre-requisites being the availability ofMicrosoft's IIS web server plus access to SQL Server, either on the same system or remotely.

Installation on our test server took around 30 minutes, including the install of SQL ServerExpress, which we had to load up before running the PowerStudio™ setup. That done, PowerStudio™ installed very easily, with the setup routing starting a browser to run the management interface for us when it finished.

However, because of the need for Adobe Flash and the security implications of running browsers on a server, we decided to connect remotely and manage PowerStudio™ from a network PC.

We found the interface straightforward, although it was a little quirky in places, and you'll either love or hate the khaki colour scheme. Still it didn't take long to get to grips with the way everything worked, and in under an hour we had identified all the PCs on our network and deployed the client to those we wanted to manage.

Client deployment is performed centrally using the tools provided, with facilities to discover new computers over the LAN or via Active Directory. A scheduler is also included to capture any new systems added after the initial deployment.



In our tests these all worked well; a couple of desktops wouldn't co-operate, but we catered for these by downloading the client and installing manually.

Unfortunately serverscan't be included but, otherwise, there are very few restrictions, with support for all versions of Windows from 2000 to the latest Windows 7 release.

Naturally we wanted to start creating power management profiles and push them out to our clients straight away, but that's not what Certero recommends. Rather it suggests customers start by monitoring power consumption for a few days, then using the information to better design the power profiles.

Moreover, using the built-in Estimator tool it's possible to come up with pretty realistic targets then, once power management is enabled, generate graphs and reports to see exactly how well you're doing.

Some setup work is needed. For example, we had to tell PowerStudio™ how much we paid for electricity and how much each type of PC consumed. However, it's not difficult and you're not just tied to visualising savings in monetary terms.

With a simple click of the mouse we were able to switch to Kilowatt hours or CO2 emissions, or even equivalent coal, wood or water consumption.

Of course, underneath the hood PowerStudio™ is using the built-inpower saving options found in Windows, including support for standby and hibernation modes.

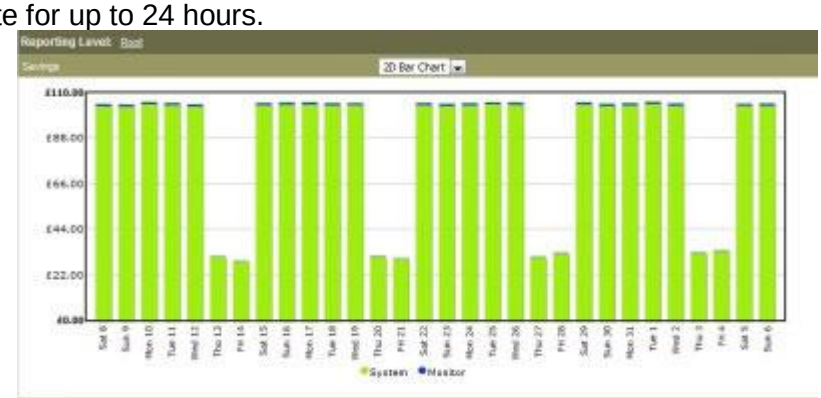
Rather than have to walk around checking the settings on every PC, however, you can enforce the application of PowerStudio™ profiles to individual systems or groups, including specific organisational units on an Active Directory network.

You can also specify different settings for normal working hours, weekends and so on, set a power-up window for maintenance activities, such as software updates, and allow users wanting access to their desktops to power up their PCs remotely.

Another impressive feature is the ability to involve users in the power saving process. This is done by awarding points for any energy saving activities, with PowerStudio™ maintaining a league table so users can find out how well they're doing compared to others.

The league table is available as graph via a client taskbar app, from which users can also see details of the policy applied to their PC and, where enabled, put their system into standby or hibernation mode, reboot, switch off and so on.

An optional Presentation mode can also be enabled here, allowing the PC to be put into an always-on state for up to 24 hours.



Unlike some other power management products, PowerStudio™ can't handle Apple Mac or Linux operating systems. Otherwise it compares well on functionality, with a user-friendly web interface rather than the command line tools often used to enforce power saving measures.

Certero has even managed to deal with Office documents left open on the desktop when Windows is powered down; a unique tool is provided to identify these files and quickly re-open and recover them should problems arise when the PC is powered back up.

A lot more than just a simple power management utility, PowerStudio™ requires careful deployment if you're to get the best out of it. Bear in mind also that the minimum purchase at present is 250 seats, although a new Lite product due soon will address the needs of the smaller business.

All in all, there's a lot to be gained from using PowerStudio™, and Certero boasts a four-month return on investment. After that it's money in the bank and enhanced green credentials to boot.

PRODUCT OVERVIEW

Ratings

- Overall rating:
- Features:
- Performance rating:
- Value for money:
- Average user rating:

Verdict

A flexible and easy to use power management solution, PowerStudio™ can help reduce energy consumption be enabling network administrators to define multiple power management schemes and target these at individual PCs, groups or Active Directory OUs.

Some preparation work is required, but it's worth it with unique tools to track actual over-estimated cost savings plus a claimed return on investment of just four months.

Other key features include the ability to involve users in the process by awarding points in a power saving league, plus user-initiated remote power up and the ability to quickly recover documents left open when Windows is put into standby.

Pros: Policy-based power management; Active Directory integration; set targets and compare actual and estimated savings; user league table; user-initiated remote power-up; document recovery tool

Cons: Windows-only; occasionally quirky web-based management interface; no support for servers; 250 seat minimum at present