

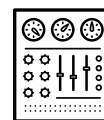
Ensono saves more than 100 work hours with Red Hat Ansible Tower

ensono®

Software

Red Hat® Ansible® Tower

Speed and consistency of service are key for managed service providers. To simplify and streamline its infrastructure and processes, Ensono migrated from community Ansible to Red Hat Ansible Tower. By using it to automate repetitive tasks, unify management, and improve cross-team collaboration, the company has saved more than 100 work hours and can focus on delivering consistent, valuable services to its clients.



IT managed services

2,000+ associates

"We stood up 40 Linux servers and 20 Windows servers in about one hour and 25 minutes. They were fully configured, deployed and loaded with all our standard tools and the client was able to access them. Without Red Hat Ansible Tower, we would have been looking at weeks for that sort of delivery."

Mark Bolwell

Lead Infrastructure Architect, Linux, Ensono

Benefits

- Saved more than 100 work hours by automating repetitive manual tasks, such as configuration management database discovery and population
- Established centralized infrastructure with role-based access controls to better allocate support staff and support enhancement of service management platform
- Improved Windows and Linux team collaboration through standardization, speeding work on valuable projects



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Increasing efficiency of managed services

Ensono helps IT leaders be the catalyst for change by harnessing the power of hybrid IT to transform their businesses. They drive digital transformation by enabling increased agility and scalability through the modernization to public cloud. Our broad services portfolio from mainframe to cloud, powered by an intelligent governance platform, is designed to help our clients operate for today and optimize for tomorrow. Ensono is an award-winning certified expert in AWS and Azure and recognized as Microsoft Datacenter Transformation Partner of the Year. Ensono has nearly 2,000 associates around the world and is headquartered in greater Chicago.

In recent years, Ensono has achieved fast-paced growth through mergers and acquisitions. Adding new companies to its systems and processes created complexity. In addition, Ensono's daily operations include many routine, repeatable tasks—such as standing up servers, patching, firewall management, and application deployment—that were slowly completed manually, creating risk of inconsistency or downtime.

These challenges became even more pressing when Ensono launched its flagship product, Ensono Cloud. A private cloud running on the company's datacenter infrastructure, Ensono Cloud is designed to help clients access infrastructure whenever and wherever they need it. Part of this offering, Ensono modus operandi (M.O.), is a service management platform that gives clients unified, real-time IT visibility and control, regardless of location or platform.

"We needed to introduce automation to increase our work efficiency, and because Ensono Cloud was to be a fully automated platform, we thought there had to be a better way of supporting its development," said Mark Bolwell, lead infrastructure architect for Linux® at Ensono. "We wanted to save money and time while working more effectively and avoiding errors. Although speed comes with automation, consistency is what we were focused on to make sure we could deliver the correct results to our clients."

Streamlining development with automation

As a long-time user of the community version of Ansible and a Red Hat Certified Cloud and Service Provider, Ensono quickly decided to use Red Hat Ansible Tower, part of Red Hat Ansible Automation, to support Ensono Cloud.

"We chose Red Hat Ansible Automation because of how approachable Red Hat and its employees are. Their focus on open source was also key," said Bolwell. "We also wanted to use Ansible APIs [application programming interfaces], RBAC and auditing functionality to deliver speed and efficiency benefits to our clients, helping us speed time to value."

Ensono uses Ansible Tower to manage almost all of its automated processes, including virtual server creation, configuration management, application deployment, continuous delivery, security, and compliance and orchestration. The Ansible Tower dashboard provides an easy-to-use, unified interface for the company's IT teams.

"We built our test labs with Ansible Tower running VMware commands and use Ansible Community on AWS [Amazon Web Services] for our clients, alongside the open source API tool Terraform," said Bolwell. "We also use Ansible to build templates for virtual machines in our test labs, then distribute them to all of our data centers using just one script."

Balancing work speed and consistency

Faster development and time to market

Ensono has used Red Hat Ansible Tower to automate many of its manual processes, improving time to market for new and updated services. The company estimates that its teams have saved over 100 work hours by automating routine tasks:

- Updating files to increase access to the company's monitoring servers took 2.5 minutes per server when done manually, but with Ansible Tower, the process takes just 12 seconds per server—reducing the total time for this process from 11.75 to 2.4 hours.
- Downloading the install and configure agents for launching a new monitoring product used to take 20 minutes per server. With an Ansible Playbook, this process now takes just one minute per server.
- Discovering and populating a configuration management database previously required 24–48 hours to discover all of the older Perl and batch scripts. Ansible Tower has reduced this process to just 25 minutes—and it can now be run every night.

Ansible Tower also helps the company's IT staff work more efficiently by reusing components in new projects. "We can reuse previous work to get services out faster and delivering the latest features and services to our clients faster also helps everyone achieve a faster return on investment," said Bolwell.

One example of this improvement is the team's recent work on a pre-release version of Windows Server 2019. It had taken them nearly eight weeks to implement Windows 2016, but they completed 90% of the work on Windows 2019 in just two days by reusing community Ansible scripts from the 2016 installation.

The first time Ensono used Ansible Tower to resolve a critical situation was a client server error that made a secure file public. After two engineers worked for 18 hours to resolve the fault on 200 servers but continued to see the error on the next two days, the company wrote an Ansible Playbook and tested it in under two and a half hours. "The next day, that time came down to 20 minutes," said Bolwell.

Simplified management

Red Hat Ansible's agentless architecture simplifies management of Ensono's large, diverse client portfolio by centralizing management processes. "It's probably the fastest thing we use. With our managed service we have to deal with a lot of firewalls and access permissions for our clients. Using the agentless architecture is a massive win because I don't have to go through change control which makes it easier and faster not having to open a firewall or port," said Bolwell.

A visual dashboard helps Ensono centralize and control its Ansible infrastructure with role-based access control, job scheduling, and graphical inventory management—resulting in more efficient use of its support staff.

"Like most managed service providers, we have a multi-tier support system, where most of the work falls to level three senior engineers and subject-matter experts [SMEs]," said Bolwell. "We use Ansible Tower's RESTful API to allow non-SME staff to take over more complex work, leaving us free for tasks that require the most time and effort."

Ensono M.O. is the company's service management platform. Accessed through the Ensono Cloud, it provides a comprehensive view of clients' managed services on any platform, anywhere. "Ensono M.O. is where we bring multiple systems into one interface to give clients a single view of their systems," said Bolwell. "They can log on to see monitoring and reporting in one place. This solution is our key differentiator, and Red Hat Ansible Tower helped us create it through Ensono Cloud."

Easier collaboration

Because Ansible is easy to use across operating systems, it has helped Ensono break down barriers between its teams. Whether focused on Windows or Linux, the company's development staff can work more closely together to benefit from their different skills and move projects forward faster.

"With these two teams working together, we now have a bigger pool of knowledge to pull from to provide better service to everybody, both internally and externally," said Bolwell.

Expanding automation to find new efficiency

Ensono plans to expand its use of Red Hat Ansible Tower to continue increasing operational speed, as well as better manage its client-facing services.

"We want to increase our efforts to standardize our offerings," said Bolwell. "New releases, operating systems, and other projects will be standardized with Red Hat, helping us deliver services and capabilities faster and more consistently."

About Ensono

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About Red Hat

Red Hat is the world's leading provider of enterprise open source software solutions, using a community-powered approach to deliver reliable and high-performing Linux, hybrid cloud, container, and Kubernetes technologies. Red Hat helps customers integrate new and existing IT applications, develop cloud-native applications, standardize on our industry-leading operating system, and automate, secure, and manage complex environments. Award-winning support, training, and consulting services make Red Hat a trusted adviser to the Fortune 500. As a strategic partner to cloud providers, system integrators, application vendors, customers, and open source communities, Red Hat can help organizations prepare for the digital future.



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