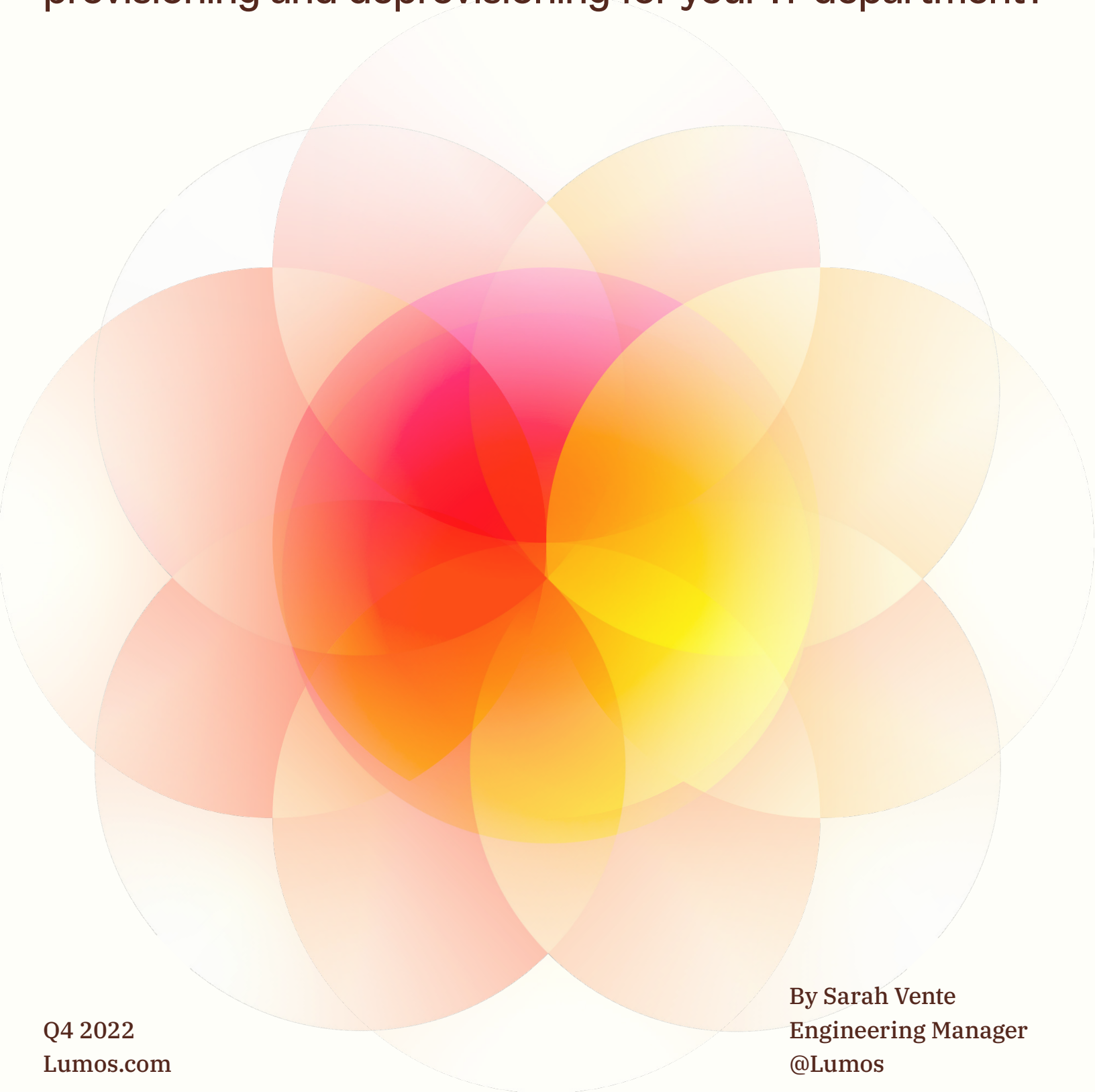


The Case for Automating Provisioning in your ITSM

How do you quantify the benefits of automating provisioning and deprovisioning for your IT department?



Introduction

Slow. Inefficient. Burnt out. IT teams are managing too much and performing too many manual tasks. From access and permissions requests to on/offboarding, laptops, support tickets, and servers, everyday IT to-do lists get longer, bandwidth tighter, and stress levels higher.

Lumos research shows that 40-50% of all your IT tickets are access requests for apps and permissions or during onboarding. And, that is taking a toll on your IT teams. Mark Jaques, Director of Information Security at Vox Media, identified these symptoms in his own team.

But then...the events of 2020 happened and Vox's IT support service was under even more pressure. With employees working remotely, his team found themselves spending less time solving strategically important problems and more time provisioning and deprovisioning access to all the apps employees needed to do their jobs. It wasn't productive. It also wasn't sustainable.

Mark went looking for a way to solve this problem – and his quest paid off. He estimates that he reduced the time his team spent on provisioning and deprovisioning tasks by 20% [1]. How did he do it? He automated. And he did it without compromising security and compliance. But first of all, how do you communicate the return on investment and business value if you focus on automating busy work like creating and deleting accounts?

[1] <https://www.lumos.com/blog/how-this-media-company-increased-efficiency-while-helping-their-it-team-avoid-burnout>

In this guide, we'll show you how to convince leadership with arguments and numbers to focus on automating provisioning and deprovisioning.

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The Four Benefits of Automation

When provisioning and deprovisioning automation is scalable, secure, and compliant, it can transform IT service management. There are three arguments for what automation can do for the business:

- 1. Improve overall workforce productivity.** If you ask a new employee how long it took for them to get access to all the services and permissions they needed, you might be shocked by what they say. We heard in some interviews that employees are waiting up to 4 weeks to be fully equipped with all the tooling they need. Getting them onboarded quickly makes them productive faster and creates a great employee experience.
- 2. Increase IT productivity and thwart burnout.** IT teams have seen a lot of churn. This makes sense when IT teams are spending the majority of their time doing manual tasks, such as onboarding, offboarding, or following up on access request tickets. Automating the creation and deletion of access lets your team focus on more strategic initiatives.
- 3. Reduce risk and exposure.** Privileged access abuse is the most common security breach. We saw it with the Uber breach [2] and Okta breach [3] in 2022. Automating the removal of accounts and reducing human error helps IT teams tackle another major problem: permission sprawl. Giving everyone too much access alleviates exponentially increasing security risks. Automating deprovisioning helps IT teams remove unnecessary access.
- 4. Decrease license spend.** When people need access, it takes time. However, once they receive it they rarely lose it. Research suggests that companies run with 25% [4] or more of software going unused. Employees change teams and projects and often stop needing access to certain software. Reclaiming unused licenses can lead to substantial cost savings.

[2] <https://www.uber.com/newsroom/security-update/>

[3] <https://www.okta.com/blog/2022/04/okta-concludes-its-investigation-into-the-january-2022-compromise/>

[4] <https://blogs.gartner.com/stephen-white/2020/05/11/shelfware-the-cio-missing-key-metric-and-cost-cutting-imperative/>

It's clear that automation is helpful. Any IT team would be overjoyed to minimize the time they spend creating and removing access. *But how to convince leadership with numbers?*

The Productivity Price of Onboarding and Offboarding

For this analysis, we are going to use a 1,000-person company as an example. First, we recommend pulling a report from your IT Ticketing System to see what the distribution of tickets is. This is a typical chart that we see with on-/offboarding taking 50% of all IT tickets. We'll split the analysis up into onboarding, offboarding, and one-off access updates.

Onboarding

For our 1,000-person company, we'll assume that 300 people are joining every year. It's fair to assume that it takes admins roughly ~8h to provision all the access during onboarding. By automating provisioning, we could bring it down to ~1h.

Plus, we can assume that newly joined employees lose 16h of productivity due to lack of access during onboarding, which could be decreased to 4h with automation. Let's assume a system admin costs the company ~\$60 per hour, while the productivity cost of a newly joined employee is around ~\$100 per hour.

IT Savings = $300 * (8h - 1h) = 2,100h * \$60 = \$126,000$

Workforce Productivity Savings = $300 * (16h - 4h) = 3,600h * \$100 = \$360,000$

Return On

One-Off Access Updates

When you have 1,000 employees, you can assume three one-off requests for a person. Let's assume a one-off access request takes an IT admin 1h to provision (including orchestrating approvals and asking clarifying questions) and an employee loses 4h in productivity, while automation can reduce the IT effort to 0.3h and employee productivity loss to 1h.

$$\text{IT Savings} = 1,000 * 3 * (1h - 0.3h) = 1,800h * \$60 = \$108,000$$

$$\text{Workforce Productivity Savings} = 1,000 * 3 * (4h - 1h) = 9,000h * \$100 = \$900,000$$

Offboarding

With offboarding taking roughly 2h per departing user and reducing that to 0.5h, the calculation is simple.

$$\text{IT Savings} = 150 * (2h - 0.5h) = 225h * \$60 = \$13,500$$

Conclusion

Automating provisioning and deprovisioning might lead to about ~\$250,000 in IT savings and ~\$1.25m in workforce productivity savings. This is a sizable amount. Just based on running the numbers, this might be the highest leverage for an IT team to elevate the productivity of the whole organization.

Investment

Reduce Costs and Boost Compliance through Automation

These days, there's an app for every business function. Apps come out, companies buy licenses...and then they don't remove access when employees no longer need it.

[5] <https://blogs.gartner.com/stephen-white/2020/05/11/shelfware-the-cio-s-missing-key-metric-and-cost-cutting-imperative/>

Estimates show that up to 25% [5] of SaaS app licenses can go unused, which means a quarter of license costs are being thrown in the trash. To prevent burning budget, Segment and AirBnB automated app access using a combination of time-based access requests and activity-based removals. Users were only granted access to some apps for short times and access was removed after a set period of inactivity.

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[6] <https://segment.com/blog/access-service/>

[7] <https://medium.com/airbnb-engineering/airbnbs-approach-to-access-management-at-scale-cfa66c32f03c>

The result? Segment reduced permissions sprawl by 90% [6] while AirBnB saw a 66% [7] reduction in user access. Then, once it's time to renew, their IT departments can true-up the totals and reduce the overall number of licenses they purchase. On average, companies can save approximately \$400 per person by running a license-lean operation (Lumos Data).

Companies can also use automation to boost compliance efforts. For SOC2 and other certifications, employees must be offboarded on-time—or it's a violation. And, employees should only have least-privilege access, or the minimum amount of access required for them to do their jobs. IT can't possibly keep track of all the new employees, people leaving, and everyone changing roles in between, which makes automation necessary to maintain both compliance and sanity.

Automation as a Strategic Differentiator

Apps are great—and they make companies run well. But companies must think about how to change their operating principles around software and turn them into a competitive differentiator.

Traditional approaches to managing technology aren't sufficient. IT departments often think that centralization is the answer but, in this case, it's not. There are too many to manage to be efficient, cost-effective, and compliant. Instead, companies must change IT, security, and procurement priorities.

Instead of having them spend their days fixing problems (hello, IT tickets), create an infrastructure that empowers employees to operate software themselves—and become a self-governed workforce. Help them make the compliant path the easy path.



The key to automation success? A centralized self-service company appstore

Automation can torpedo IT tickets—but it's only part of the solution. When used in conjunction with a self-service, centralized company appstore, employees can discover apps that are relevant to their roles, request access, and access the apps they need—without IT help.

A company appstore can also automate onboarding requests, “email group” requests to create groups or add members, and automate offboarding request workflows so no employees have leftover or inappropriate access.

The best part? Self-service saves IT teams time while still maintaining security and compliance. In fact, the median TTR of an access request submitted through an appstore is just three minutes, saving 230 employee days every year.

Are you ready to make the case for automation? We're here to help!

Start with our free IT ticket analysis. Reach out to the Lumos team by clicking here or directly at Lumos.com/demo-request.