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SOTI MobiControl



By Paul Ferrill December 29, 2017 12:00PM EST

Editors' Rating: ●●●●● EXCELLENT

PROS

Remote control feature for Android platform. Comprehensive set of profile and rules-based device management functions.

CONS

Profiles must be configured by using an older user interface. Azure Active Directory and SAML 2.0 also require older user interface.

BOTTOM LINE

SOTI MobiControl does a good job of matching up with the competition on a feature-for-feature basis and even leads in areas such as remote control. Its new user interface is a significant improvement, though you'll still need to use the old one for certain key capabilities.

The latest update to SOTI MobiControl marks version 14 of the product, which first arrived back in 2004 as a mobile device management (MDM) platform oriented at Windows PC/CE devices. This latest iteration (which begins at \$4 per device per month) packs a number of updates since our last review, including an Administration Console that employs a more modern and device-centric design. Other enhancements include their top-of-the-heap remote control functionality and a new macro capability. No other product in this roundup had this kind of remote device control.

SOTI MobiControl continues to provide the ability to manage remote printers and Windows CE devices, adding a wide range of vertical market-specific hardware to the typical stable of mobile phones and tablets. With this release, they've added significant support for Linux-based devices of any form factor, including desktops down to miscellaneous Internet of Things (IoT) endpoints. This is fortunate because, as Microsoft pushes its popular Windows CE device endpoint platform to end-of-life, Linux-based alternatives have become more prevalent in IoT architectures. Combine all of that with support for all our other targeted mobile platforms, including Windows 10 Mobile, and you've got a well-earned Editors' Choice award for this round, along with co-winner VMware AirWatch



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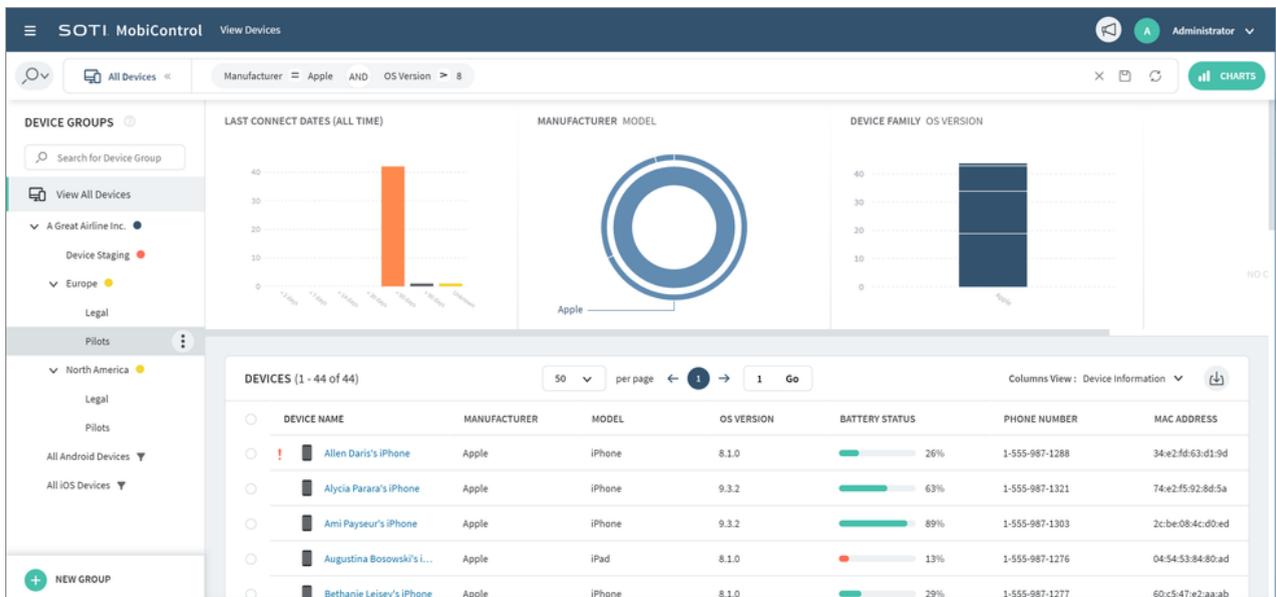
Editors' Rating: ●●●●● EXCELLENT

Installation and Device Enrollment

You sign up for a free trial by clicking the "Free Trial" button on the product webpage, followed by completing the information form. This will give you access to the on-premises version to install on your own server. SOTI also offers a trial version of their cloud offering by customer request. This is the version we were given access to for the purposes of this review. We did not test the on-premises version.

Enrolling devices consists of creating an email that provides instructions to your users on how to install the management agent on their device. For Android devices, this consists of installing a device-specific agent and connecting to the management server. Our Android test device was an LG G3, which received an LG-specific agent. Other agents include one specific to Samsung and a generic Android agent. Our previous complaint about the non-working enrollment URL has been fixed.

SOTI MobiControl includes the ability to lock down web browsing by using the Webroot SecureWeb Browser. This application must be downloaded to each device and the native browser disabled in order to fully implement this policy. All of this can be accomplished by using a profile created from the device console. SOTI provides a QR code for the purpose of automating a number of installation and configuration settings to include enrollment information, Wi-Fi settings and file download.





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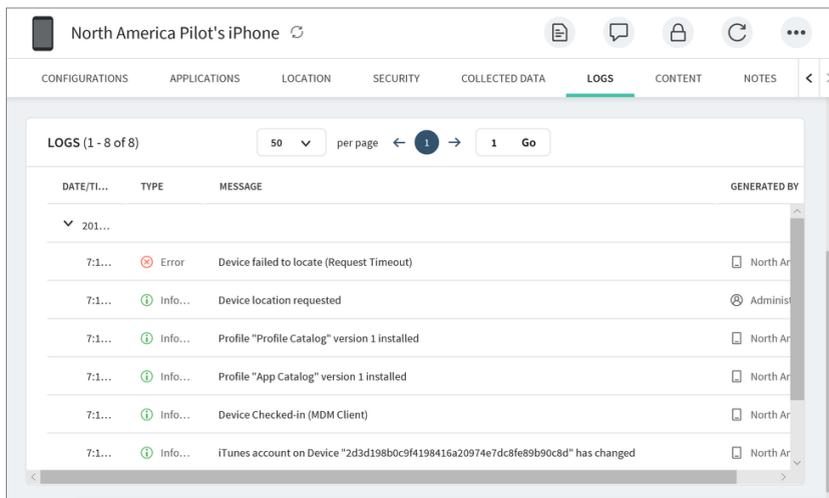
Editors' Rating: ●●●●● EXCELLENT

Management User Interface

This new version of SOTI MobiControl has updated the user interface (UI) to a modern, device-centric design with a search tool as the primary way of finding things. That's a marked difference from the tree-view inherent in some of the competition, notably AppTec360 Enterprise Mobility Management and Radia Endpoint Manager. Details for a specific device can be displayed by clicking the device name in the Device table. You can also search for a specific device by using the search tool. This same tool makes it possible to use a compound query statement to search for a category of devices based on your criteria. You can create groups by using the same method to find and then group similar devices.

That's handy, but if querying isn't your preferred navigation method, the new dashboard is now a dynamic and clickable view, too. Default groups for things such as "All Android Devices" or "All iOS Devices" make it simple to send messages or apply an action to every device. Creating a new group is as simple as clicking the "New Group" button and then either specifying a filter or simply dragging and dropping a device into the new group. Individual charts can be customized by using the Gear icon to change how the data is displayed, or you can create a completely new chart by using the "Custom Chart" feature.

For Android and Windows devices, SOTI MobiControl offers a remote control capability that lets an administrator view and control a user's mobile device screen from the management console. This feature has been updated to add the use of a device skin to show what device is under control, giving an IT admin the ability to assist a user as long as they have connectivity. It also supports full two-way file transfer along with the recording of a remote device's screen. A new macro feature makes it easy to execute a series of steps on like devices to automate tasks.





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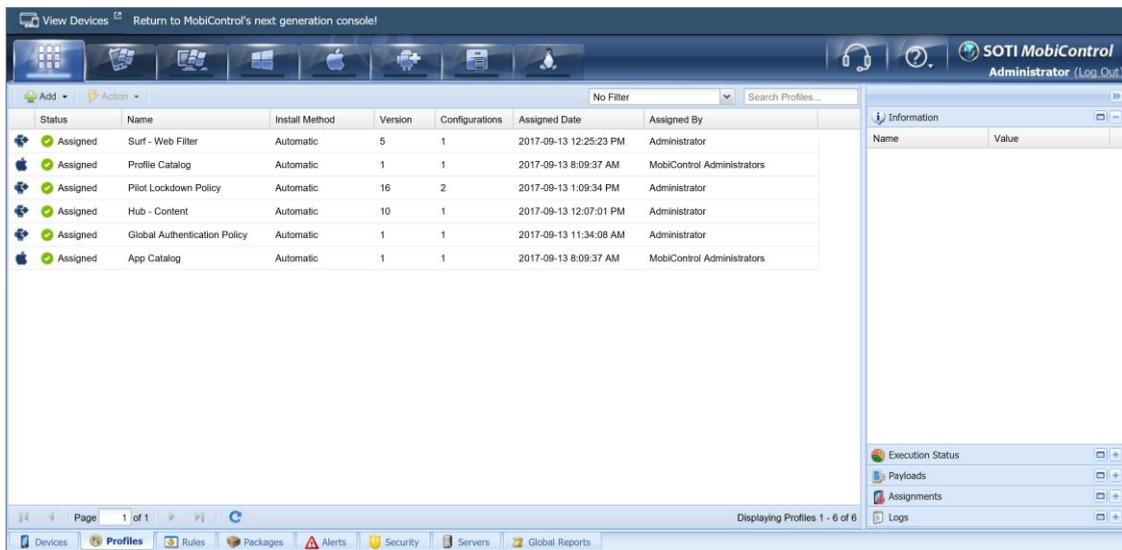
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It is possible to restrict the use of specific apps on each platform. For Android, this includes things such as the Device Settings, Google Play store, YouTube, and the Internet Browser. Creating a new profile happens at the device platform level, meaning you can't define one security profile for all devices without creating a profile for each platform. While that's not a huge deal, it could be tedious to build the same security policy for multiple platforms if your company requires a long list of restrictions.

The SOTI MobiControl reporting engine provides a total of 21 pre-defined formats which can be exported to CSV, PDF, TXT, or XLS. Reports can be generated on-demand or scheduled for a pre-defined time. Scheduled reports go to a list of recipients by using a typical addressing scheme including primary, courtesy copy (CC), and blind courtesy copies (BCC). The wizard does allow for only BCC addresses should you wish to send to a list that way.

Adding files to the content library requires only a simple drag-and-drop operation from your desktop file explorer to the SOTI MobiControl Content Library. Once you have items in the Content Library, you can choose which devices have access either individually or by group. Another way to move content to or from a device is to create a "File Sync" rule to either push or pull files. This happens from the Rules tab under the "File Sync" menu item. The Rules tab also supports monitoring devices for data and voice usage through the Telecom Expense Management tab.





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Dollars and Cents

SOTI offers several pricing models for their software including device-based and user-based options for their cloud or Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) offering. Cloud-based costs \$4 per device per month. The on-premises version is priced by device at \$72 per year plus \$18 for maintenance.

SOTI MobiControl matches up with all of the products in this roundup quite well, and stands out from the rest with its remote control feature. Additionally, support for all our test devices, including the elusive Windows 10, make this the best MDM tool on the market.

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