MEN & MICE SUITE RELEASE STRATEGY

White Paper

INTRODUCTION

Men & Mice Suite customers are typically engaged in highly heterogeneous operating environments that require a stable and predictable IT infrastructure. Consequently, it is essential that Men & Mice software is of high quality, with a low number of high impact software errors and fast resolution of vulnerabilities and errors in general.

Men & Mice recognizes that an effective release strategy for the Men & Mice Suite software is key to providing customers with the stability and security demanded by their daily operations. Additionally, a release strategy which clearly indicates long term support and feature releases allows customers to plan for and anticipate important upgrades and releases that can increase the efficiency of their software utilization and consequently benefit their organization as a whole.

By introducing a new release and Long Term Support (LTS) strategy, together with a new version naming scheme for specific Men & Mice Suite versions, Men & Mice is adapting its processes to better provide for customers' needs and demands.

THE CHALLENGE

Men & Mice appreciates the fact that each of our customers' systems operate in a unique environment and requires diverse solutions to ensure system stability and predictability. The main challenge is to execute a release strategy that satisfies the varied needs of all our customers by ensuring the following:

- software that is consistently stable
- software that is of high quality
- software that supports seamless integration of new versions

With more than 25 years' experience in DNS, DHCP and IP address management, Men & Mice understands that the ability to constantly update and/or install new versions varies widely from customer to customer.

Apart from the straightforward differences in a customer's needs such as dictated by an organization's size and the nature of its business, there may be a number of infrastructure and operational (I&O) aspects that affect the frequency of deployment of software updates. For example, different customers employ different individual protocols and upgrade strategies, some which may involve strict testing procedures and/or narrow and rare change windows.

At other times, company-specific administration and approval processes affect the flexibility of implementation. Additionally, as IPAM usually forms an integral component of critical network management processes, upgrades to new versions, especially versions which affect the SOAP API , may require collaboration between different teams to validate the new version . This may turn a simple upgrade into a time-consuming challenge for systems administrators and management alike.

Men & Mice is constantly exploring ways to improve our products and services to our customers. Adopting a new release strategy is Men & Mice's answer to the challenge of better aligning our products with the diverse protocols and demands existing in our customers' individual opeaing environments.

NEW RELEASE STRATEGY

Currently, a new version of the Men & Mice Suite is released every four months, in January, May and September respectively. With the new release strategy, three versions are still scheduled for release every year as before, but the versions will be differentiated by two distinct types of releases: Long Term Support (LTS) releases, and feature releases. The first release in January of every year will be an LTS release and will be supported for two years after its initial release date (see Figure 1). The two other releases, in May and September, will be feature releases.

While the primary focus of the feature releases will be to introduce new functionality and features, the primary focus of the LTS releases will be to fine-tune and improve those newly introduced features, as well as to improve the stability and performance of the Men & Mice Suite in general.

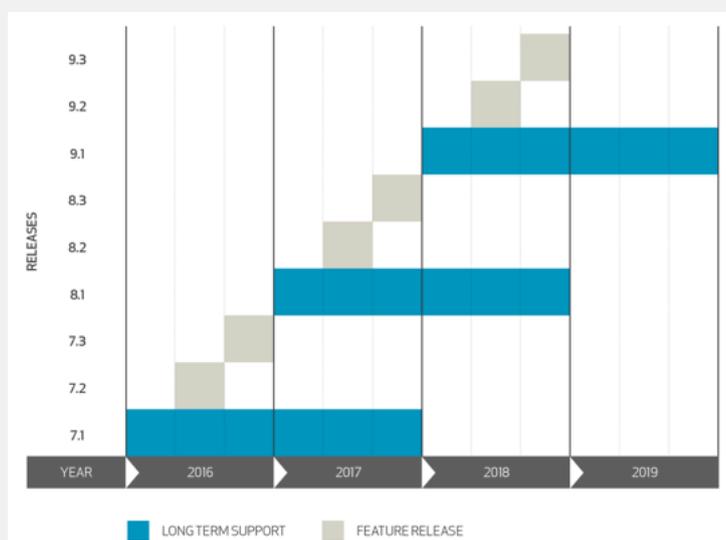## THE LIFE CYCLE OF MEN & MICE SUITE RELEASES

Figure 1: The life cycle of Men & Mice releases. Blue bars indicate LTS releases and grey bars feature releases.

[1]SOAP - Simple Object Access Protocol and API – Application Programming Interface
[2]Unless the API and functionality remains unchanged between versions.

Figure 1 graphically illustrates the release strategy, including the life cycle of each version of the prospective Men & Mice releases for the next number of years. The blue bars represent the Long Term Support releases while the grey bars represent the feature releases. The length of each bar directly corresponds to the length of time for which that particular release is supported.

Each year is divided into four-month intervals, starting in January 2016 when the LTS Men & Mice Suite Version 7.1 (blue bar) will be released. This release will be supported for two years, or until the end of December 2017, when it will reach its end of life (EOL). In May 2016, the first feature release related to Version 7.1, Men & Mice Suite Version 7.2 (grey bar), will be released and be fully supported until the end of August 2016.

As the feature releases are only supported for a period of four months, customers are encouraged to update as soon as new versions become available. However, when LTS version releases near their EOL, an announcement will be sent to customers several months in advance to allow for ample opportunity to upgrade to the latest LTS version before the previous one reaches EOL.

Since new LTS versions will be released once every year and feature releases twice, at most three versions of the Men & Mice Suite will be supported at any given time: two LTS versions and the latest feature release version.

Following their initial release, the supported LTS versions of the Men & Mice Suite will receive updates and patches as appropriate, but the following aspects will only be included in the LTS releases scheduled for January of every year:

• Fixes for software errors
• Stability and performance enhancing features
• Patches for vulnerabilities found in third-party software, e.g. BIND and ISC-DHCP on Men & Mice Appliances

In addition to this, updates to LTS releases may also include minor functionality additions, such as customer specific features.

End of Life Announcements

It's often said that all good things come to an end - an adage that appears to be even more appropriate when applied to software. However, advance notification can significantly ease the inevitable period of transition that follows when a product, feature or platform reaches its end of life.

The following clear procedural guidelines for EOL announcements will allow Men & Mice customers the latitude to plan accordingly:

EOL announcements for Men & Mice products/features will be sent to customers 4 months (1 release period) before the product/feature will be discontinued.

EOL announcements for platform support (e.g. Windows 2003) will be sent to customers 8 months (two release periods) before the platform support will be discontinued.

Customers will be alerted to announcements through

• specific EOL email notifications
• the Men & Mice management console during upgrades

All information on EOL announcements can be retrieved from the Men & Mice Documentation Page .

NEW VERSION NAMING SCHEME

The new release strategy is complemented by the new Men & Mice Suite version naming scheme. The last and latest Men & Mice Suite version for 2015 is named Version 6.9. From 2016, the major version number (the first label) will be increased by 1 and the minor version number (the second label) will correspond to the number of the release of that particular year, i.e. the first label. For example, the first release in the year 2016, also the LTS release, will be named version 7.1. The following releases of the same year, the feature releases, will be named 7.2 and 7.3 respectively. Thereafter the first LTS release of 2017 will be named 8.1, the feature releases 8.2. and 8.3, and so the system will continue year on year.

The version number will therefore always correlate directly with the time of the release, rather than with the amount of new functionality, as has been the case in the past. All x.1 releases will be LTS releases, and the x.2 and x.3 release will be feature releases.

Any updates released for the supported versions, regardless how minor, will be reflected in the versions' third number label. For example, the first update for Version 7.1 will be Version 7.1.1, regardless of whether it contains an upgrade to a single component or to multiple Men & Mice Suite components of the related LTS release version. All updates to a supported version will be officially released and made available to the public to ensure that there is no gap in the versions available to the public.

HOW DOES THE RELEASE STRATEGY MEET THE CHALLENGE?

John Lennon said that life is what happens while you're making other plans. Having worked for many years in the constantly changing IT environment, the Men & Mice team understands very well that not all events can be predicted or prevented. However, the support you receive before, during and after unexpected events makes all the difference to the severity of its effects.

Instituting a distinct long term support strategy for specific releases provides customers with the assurance that Men & Mice is committed to fixing particular software issues related to every LTS release. It also gives customers the opportunity to choose a specific release path, secure in the knowledge that Men & Mice will apply fixes for software errors to a version as needed throughout the two-year lifetime of its LTS release. Additionally, customers have the freedom to select the feature versions of their choice to stay up to date on the latest functionality in the Men & Mice Suite solution.

HOW DOES THE CUSTOMER BENEFIT FROM THE LTS RELEASE STRATEGY?

Men & Mice Suite customers benefit from the LTS release strategy in a number of ways.

Stability: A distinct release strategy provides a customer with assurance that their Men & Mice Suite version will be fully supported and not require a major upgrade for a foreseeable period of time.

Predictability: A clear release pattern allows customers to better anticipate what to expect and when. Customers can therefore plan and schedule their upgrades further in advance, coordinating it more effectively with other I&O requirements.
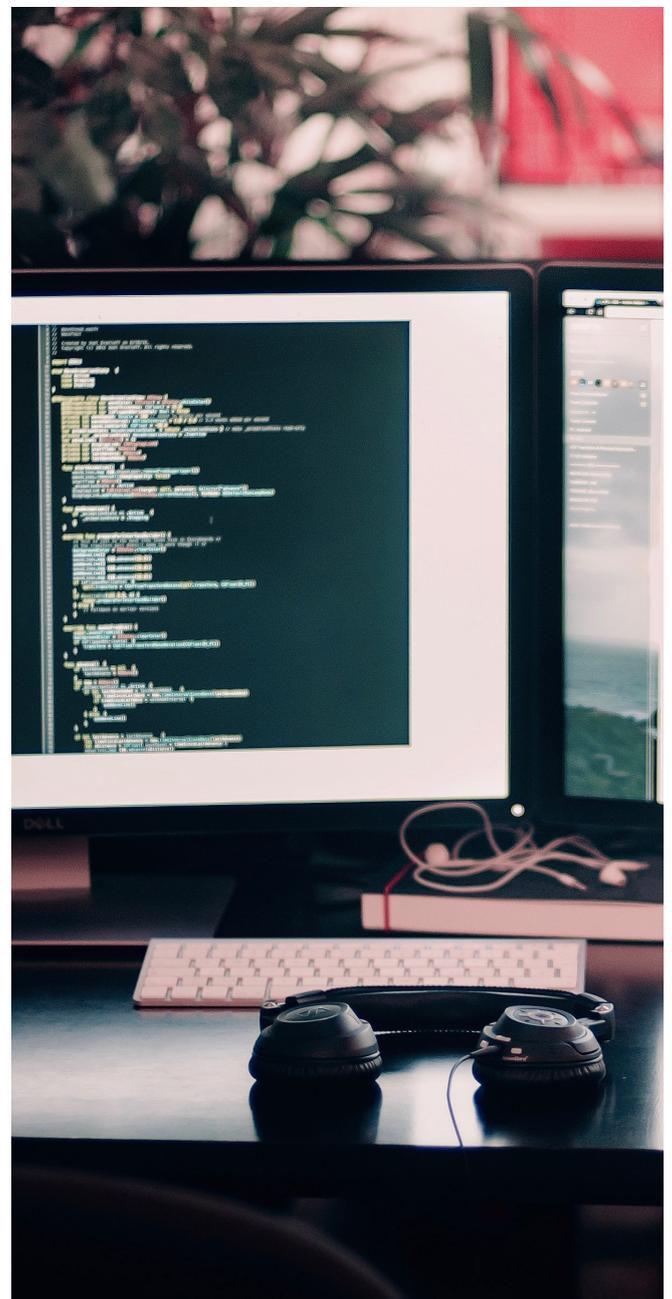
Efficiency: A reliable release strategy supports better internal planning and scheduling, thereby saving customers time and money with regard to I&O and general administration.

Choice: A well-defined release strategy gives the customer the freedom to choose a Men & Mice Suite that suits their needs, as it's clear which versions include the latest features, as well as which versions Men & Mice is committed to patch for pre-determined periods of time.

Security: A strategy that allows for better defined upgrade scheduling and planning enables tighter DDI system security.

CONCLUSION

By introducing long term support releases and adopting a new version naming convention, Men & Mice aims to meet the need for predictability as required by customers, while simultaneously making the Men & Mice Suite solution simpler, more adaptable and more efficient in practice. A better defined release strategy doesn't only increase customer satisfaction, but also gives customers the flexibility to determine how to keep their software up to date and well-maintained.
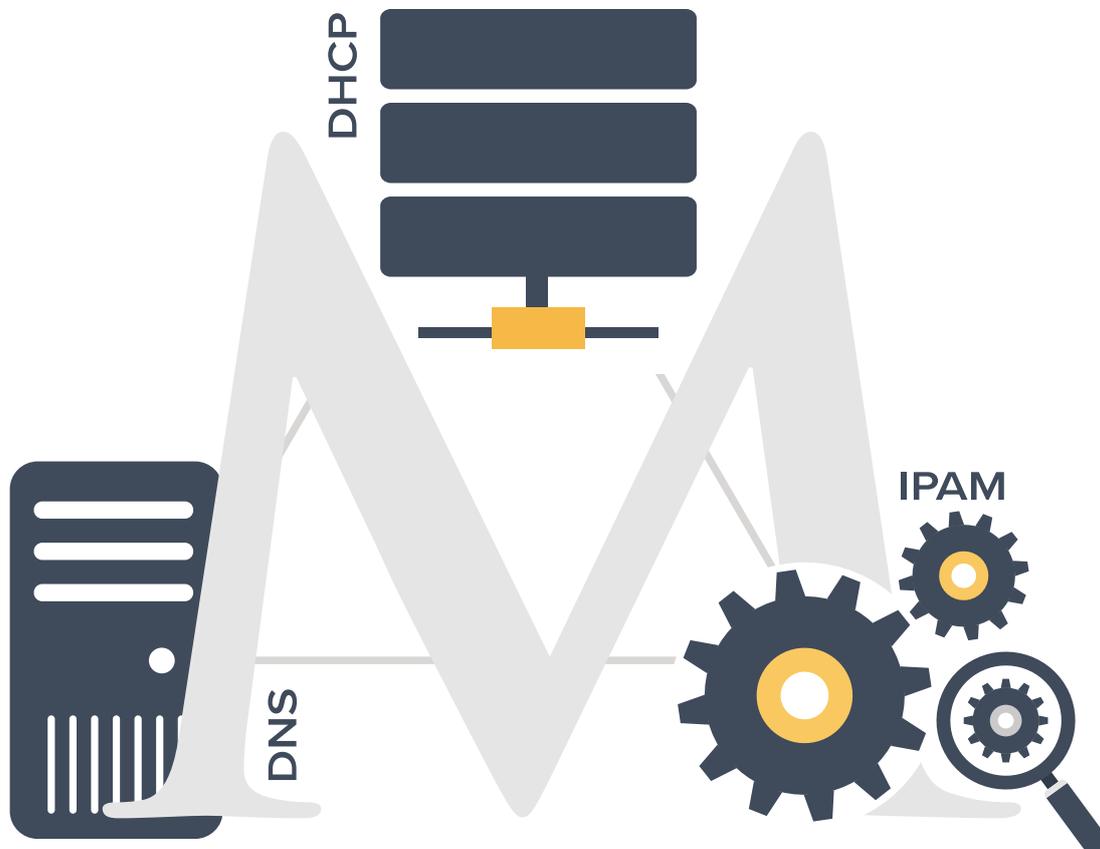

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[4]From 2016, annual LTS releases will have a new set of activation keys that will only be available to customers with a valid maintenance agreement.

MEN & MICE SUITE

The Men & Mice Suite solution simplifies and streamlines DDI management in large and growing computer networks by building a sophisticated layer of non-intrusive, integrated DNS, DHCP and IPAM bridges on top of existing DNS and DHCP network infrastructure. Through a unified management interface and single IP address database, the Men & Mice Suite solution provides a unique, real-time overview of an enterprise's network, granting administrators centralized control and administration of multiple DNS and DHCP servers in homogenous or mixed environments, such as Microsoft, Unix/Linux and Cloud environments, or a mixture thereof.

To ensure the solution will scale well with businesses as they grow, the Men & Mice Suite supports a wide range of DNS and DHCP servers such as BIND, Microsoft DNS, PowerDNS, Unbound, Cisco DHCP and ISC DHCP. In keeping with the demand for cloud dexterity, the Men & Mice Suite also supports Microsoft Azure DNS and AWS Amazon Route 53. Requiring no radical changes to an organization's pre-existing network environment, the Men & Mice Suite effectively leverages an organization's investment in existing infrastructure.

The Men & Mice Suite is ideal as an integrated package, though each module can be licensed and deployed inpendently.

CONTACT MEN & MICE

For further information on the new Men & Mice Suite release strategy and/or version naming scheme, please contact:

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For general or sales enquiries, contact a member of the Men & Mice team at sales@menandmice.com or at one of the following telephone numbers:

International: (+354) 412 1500
US & Canada: 1 (408) 516 9582

Men & Mice training services can be contacted at training@menandmice.com

FREE TRIAL

If you'd like to explore the ways in which you and your team can benefit from acquiring Men & Mice solutions for DNS, DHCP and IP management issues, a free trial can be obtained from http://info.menandmice.com/DNS-IPAM-DHCP-trial

ABOUT MEN & MICE

Founded in 1990, Men & Mice is headquartered in Iceland. We are a team of experts who have been in the DNS, DHCP and IP address management (DDI) business for a long time. Drawing inspiration from our geographic location midway between the USA and Europe, we possess a unique perspective on the challenges of DNS, DHCP and IP address management faced by medium to large global enterprises today. The combination of our extensive experience and expertise and our excellent software products, provides our customers with simple and flexible, yet highly reliable, DDI solutions.

In a competitive DDI market, we pride ourselves on our ability to adapt our solutions to suit our customers' needs. We don't expect our customers to adapt their needs to suit our solutions.

Men & Mice have operations in the US, Europe and Asia, as well as resellers in many countries.
For more information on Men & Mice, our products and solutions, please visit menandmice.com.

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