

image or rebuilding the operating system. As a result, OEMs can reduce the number of images they maintain. The software tool 606 also increases the life span of the images because the images do not need to be rebuilt for new devices. In this example, the software tool 606 is a mass storage device installation tool (e.g., msdinst.exe). The software tool 606 allows OEMs to change existing offline images without booting into or recreating those images. The software tool 606 works with various offline images including, but not limited to, offline images that are accessible via a network such as network 106 and need new mass storage device drivers. For example, the software tool 606 can update drivers that already exist on the image. The software tool 606 also allows OEMs to update areas in the registry. In one embodiment, the software tool 606 executes in a minimal operating system environment.

The user creates a Sysprep.inf file with only the [Sysprep-MassStorage] section. In the [SysprepMassStorage] section, the user lists each new mass storage devices by a unique identifier (ID) that need to be added. The user accesses the software tool 606, for example, by installing the tool on a computer that is connected to a network such as network 106 and is running a minimal operating system. The user opens a command window and starts execution of the software tool 606 with command-line options. The command-line options include, but are not limited to, the path to the new Sysprep.inf file and the path to the directory that contains the image to be updated. For example, the following command may be used.

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D:\i386\system32>msdinst.exe      A:\Sysprep.inf
E:\Tools\Image1
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In response to the command, the software tool 606 adds each ID from the new Sysprep.inf to a critical device database such as device database 608 enabling the mass storage device driver to boot the system. In addition, the software tool 606 installs the necessary driver files and configures those drivers to start as specified in the Sysprep.inf file. Further, the software tool 606 updates the Sysprep-clean section with all the new and updated registry information. Also, the software tool 606 searches Sysprep.inf for driver files in the file system related to the drivers identified in Sysprep.inf. In particular, the software tool 606 searches the regular and compressed versions of the driver's .inf files in the same directory as originally specified in the new Sysprep.inf. For example, supermsd.sys may be the .inf file for one of the drivers. The software tool 606 looks for supermsd.sys first and also looks for any compressed versions of supermsd.sys if they exist. The software tool 606 also searches all the files in the offline image's driver.cab, all the files in the offline image's driver.cab present in the source media, and the offline image's sourcepath directory for the regular and compressed versions of each driver's .inf file.

When introducing elements of the present invention or the embodiment(s) thereof, the articles "a," "an," "the," and "said" are intended to mean that there are one or more of the elements. The terms "comprising," "including," and "having" are intended to be inclusive and mean that there may be additional elements other than the listed elements.

In view of the above, it will be seen that the several objects of the invention are achieved and other advantageous results attained.

As various changes could be made in the above constructions, products, and methods without departing from the scope of the invention, it is intended that all matter contained

in the above description and shown in the accompanying drawings shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for manipulation by a computer of target software stored on one or more target computer-readable storage media, said target software having an online state and an offline state, wherein said get software is in the online state when being executed and in the offline state when not being executed, said system comprising a driver executing on the computer to provide access to the target software by mounting the target computer-readable storage media on the computer, said driver comprising one or more redirect components for manipulating the target software when the target software is offline by receiving, from a user, at least one command having a storage location specified therein and modifying the specified storage location to redirect the command to operate on the target software stored on the target computer-readable storage media mounted on the computer.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the target software comprises an operating system, and wherein the target software is online when operating system is executing.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the target software comprises an application program, and wherein the target software is online when the application program is executing.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer and the target software are connected to a data communication system, and wherein the driver executes on the computer to provide access to the target software via the data communication system.

5. The system of claim 1, further comprising a graphical user interface, wherein the command comprises input from the user via the graphical user interface.

6. The system claim 1, wherein the driver, responsive to user input, manipulates at least one system setting for the target software.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the target software comprises at least one file, and wherein the driver, responsive to user input, manipulates the target software by modifying the file.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the target computer-readable storage media comprise one or more files, wherein the driver modifies the files.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the driver adds to or deletes from the files.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the driver comprises computer-executable instructions for storing, in a queue accessible by the computer, a list of one or more tasks associated with execution of the command.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the driver further comprises in computer-executable instructions for modifying the list of tasks stored in the queue to direct the tasks to operate on the target computer-readable storage media.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein the driver further comprises compute-executable instructions for committing the queue to perform each of the modified tasks.

13. The system of claim 11, wherein the computer-executable instructions for storing and modifying are executed when the target software is in the online state.

14. The system of claim 1, wherein the driver comprises a service component for adding a service to the target software by installing one or more files associated with the service to the target computer-readable storage media.

15. The system of claim 1, wherein the driver comprises a registry component for updating at least one system setting