



SOTI MobiControl™

EDITOR RATING: **EXCELLENT**

Review Date June 13, 2016

BY PAUL FERRILL

SOTI MobiControl (which begins at \$4 per device per month) has been around since 2004, starting as a Windows PC/CE management tool and then expanding to take on the broader role of **mobile device management** (MDM). With deep Windows roots, it's no surprise that SOTI MobiControl has tight integration with Active Directory (AD) and incorporates the concepts of multi-level privileges based on group membership. The latest version (v.13) includes a wide range of features such as remote device control, which works just as you would expect if you were remotely connecting to a PC.

PROS

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

CONS

A few pain points during the device registration process. Dashboard not customizable.

BOTTOM LINE

Solid mobile device management (MDM) product with a few minor annoyances. Price competitive with the big players including Airwatch and Good.

SOTI MobiControl also provides 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. A staging capability for corporately owned devices makes it easy to fully configure the SOTI agent before issuing it to an employee. Combine all that with support for all of our 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.

Installation and Device Enrollment

You sign up for a free trial by clicking the "Free Trial" button on the [product web page](#), 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 I was given access to for the purposes of this review. I did not test the on-premises version.

Enrolling devices consists of creating an email that provides instructions to the 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 Samsung and a generic Android agent. One nitpick I had here was the Enrollment URL displayed in the Device Enrollment Details box isn't fully displayed and, if you enter just the information shown on the screen, it takes you to a nonexistent page.



SOTI MobiControl includes the ability to lock down web browsing 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 offers a QR code generation tool to automate a number of installation and configuration settings to include enrollment information, Wi-Fi settings, and file download. While the QR code tool is nice, it would be great if those were automatically generated (like they are with VMware AirWatch) instead of requiring a separate step.



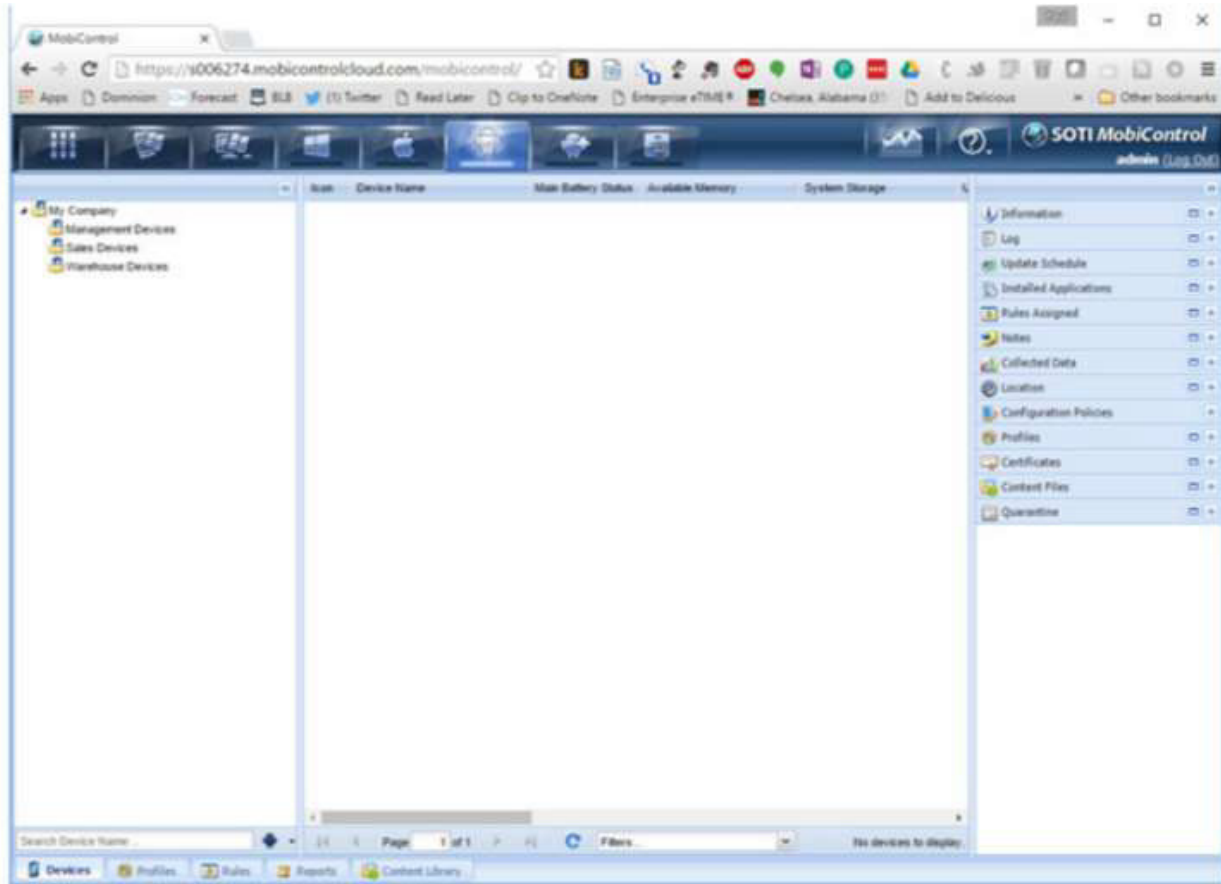
Management User Interface

SOTI MobiControl uses a tree-view user interface (UI), similar to AppTec360 Enterprise Mobility Management \$1.12 at AppTec360 and Radia Endpoint Manager \$2.70 at Radia, based on a default set of groups which include Management, Sales and Warehouse Devices. These groups can easily be changed by right-clicking on the group name and choosing “Manage Group, Rename.” The Dashboard view gives you information about devices and system statistics in a single page. Unfortunately, the dashboard is a static view and not customizable in this release. One note of interest here was the warning given by Firefox that the Adobe Flash plug-in was vulnerable and should be updated. That wasn’t a product issue per se but due to my default Firefox install.

For Android and Windows devices, SOTI MobiControl offers a very nice remote control capability that allows an IT administrator (admin) to view and control a user’s mobile device screen from the management console. Using this tool locally requires a plug-in download, but once installed, you have full control over a remote device. This gives an admin the ability to give assistance to 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. No other product in this roundup had a remote capability that was this robust.

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 predefined formats which can be exported to CSV, PDF, TXT, or XLS. Reports can be generated on-demand or scheduled for a predefined time. Scheduled reports go to a list of recipients 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.

Dollars and Cents

SOTI offers several pricing models for their software including device-based and user-based options for the cloud (Software-as-a-Service or SaaS) offering. Cloud-based is \$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 the remote control feature. On the negative side, I did hit a few snags with device enrollment, and the dashboard can't be modified for this version of the product. However, support for all our test devices, including the elusive Windows 10, help make up for these shortcomings.

