

Scripting Software Removal

how to silently uninstall software in your scripts

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No matter if you need to remove some old software as a prerequisite to installing the latest release or if you discovered people have installed *Age of Empires* all over your network, the need to remove software from systems in an automated fashion is one that manages to surface regularly. Most of the information you need is in the registry but a silent removal is not always so easy to come up with. Here we will cover some tips and tricks to finding that silent uninstall command line- and if you can't find it, how you can go about building your own.

The functionality of the Add/Remove Programs applet driven by registry entries found in the registry right here:

```
HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall
```

In each subkey, you will find varying details regarding the installed software and how it may be removed. If you are lucky, you will find a value named QuietUninstallString or QuietUninstallString. But if not just grab the more commonly found UninstallString value:

```
Set WSHShell = CreateObject ("WScript.Shell")
UninstallString = WSHShell.RegRead
("HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall\KB870669\UninstallString")
```

Now to make that "loud" uninstall shut up! Just which arguments may be added to do so naturally depend upon the tool used to create the installation. While installations are often well planned, uninstalls are normally an automatic feature of the setup authoring tool and with customization being so rare, they will almost always support the native switches provided by the setup authoring tool. Below we take the previously obtained UninstallString value and append the necessary switches for some popular vendor setups...

For Microsoft setups:

```
UninstallString & "-qn -nr"
```

For InstallShield setups:

```
UninstallString & "-a"
```

For Wise setups

```
UninstallString & "/S"
```

For InnoSetup setups

```
UninstallString & "/SILENT /NORESTART"
```

Continuing from our initial script where we read the UninstallString value, the below example makes the removal of the InnoSetup installed Audacity software a dialog free operation...

```
' Uninstall Audacity 1.2.0
COMSPEC = WSHShell.ExpandEnvironmentStrings("%COMSPEC%")
WSHShell.Run COMSPEC & " /c " & UninstallString & "/SILENT /NORESTART", 7, True
```

I've focused on the more difficult to work with legacy setup packages, but I should quickly point out that Windows Installer makes it very easy to do with its extensive command line support. And, with

Windows Installer becoming more and more commonly used by software vendors, silent removal can be a snap:

```
Msiexec.exe /x <MSI GUID or Path and Filename> /qn REBOOT=ReallySuppress
```

Some applications will be more challenging than others to remove quietly, but it is increasingly rare that it is not supported by one of the methods described here. [M](#)

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