PATIENTLINE PERKS UP NETWORK SYSTEM MANAGEMENT WITH BIGFIX AND NEBULAS SECURITY

BIGFIX

Patientline
TAKING CARE OF COMMUNICATION

AT A GLANCE

Patientline markets bedside systems to hospitals to provide communication, entertainment, information and healthcare services for patients, clinicians and administrators. The company needed to maintain the integrity and securely manage its network of security of its network of servers, desktops and laptops across multiple sites.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Highly diversified customer base–business operations in UK and Netherlands
- Widely distributed employees–administrators in each hospital and employees throughout Europe – 2500 PCs under management
- Different Microsoft Windows operating system versions operating across network
- Manual process to upgrade and install patches on different PCs brought delays and potential for intrusion risks
- Routine management processes encroaching on IT team's time and reduced productivity

IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Solution implmented by BigFix partner Nebulas Security
- BigFix installed on all PCs in the Patientline network
- Software license tracking
- Primary focus patching and software update

RESULTS

- All relevant patches, fixes and service packs are now monitored and downloaded automatically
- Maintenance is now seamless and synchronised, resulting in weeks of time saving and error elimination
- Patientline gained insights into own systems, such as individual machine configurations

Patientline is a global organisation, with the Head Office office in Slough UK, 156 live sites across the UK and the Netherlands. A successful business of over ten years standing, Patientline markets bedside systems in acute hospitals providing communication, entertainment, information and

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> Infrastructure and Security Manager, Pateintline,

healthcare services for patients, clinicians and administrators. For medical staff, this includes electronic patient records and food ordering, but in a growing number of hospitals the Patientline systems also supply internet, gaming and email services to patients.

In the UK, hospitals are not required to provide bedside information and entertainment services; but in 2000 the Government launched the Patient Power Programme to ensure better provision of such electronic services. Patientline was one of three providers to be granted a full licence to install and operate systems in acute care hospitals in England. The company now supplies systems to some 60 percent of hospitals across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Challenge

As a provider of advanced communication systems across a geographically dispersed customer base, Patientline is an enthusiastic user of remote system management technology. With a small team of administrators at each hospital site, the company supports employees who are spread of a wide geography, and manages some 2,500 PCs across Europe. A Wide Area Network (WAN) provides network connectivity and management of switches and routers, but the diversity of endpoint platforms has been less easy to control.

"Although the organisation has standardised on the Windows operating system, we haven't always been able to implement the same version across every PC," explains Wayne Sims, Patientline's Infrastructure and Security Manager. "Maintaining each version has always been part of our standard procedure, but the rate of release of new patches and upgrades to the

operating system has increased rapidly in recent months. This means downloading multiple patches for different versions of the same platform and writing a different executable to install each one of them – a task that had begun to encroach disproportionately on my team's time."

Not only was the maintenance task demanding in terms of resource, it was also potentially risky. The original manual process created a significant delay between patch release and installation, during which the entire network was vulnerable to external intrusions. It also introduced the risk of human error because each OS version required an individual installation routine.

The Solution

"We soon realised we needed a quicker and more reliable way of maintaining network integrity, so we began shopping around," says Wayne Sims. The result was a shortlist of potential products, but no clear winner – until Sims came across BigFix.

The BigFix Enterprise Suite is a security configuration management tool offering scaleable management of servers, desktops and laptops, no matter where they are or how they connect to the network. After an initial discussion with BigFix Inc, Patientline contacted UK distributor, Nebulas Security, to find out more. The team from Nebulas Security listened carefully to Patientline's needs, then set up a pilot system to demonstrate patch distribution

Customer Needs Met

- Service packs, patch configuration and hot-fixes implemented simultaneously across all sites, worldwide
- New fixes and updates monitored and made available as they are announced
- Fast, reliable control of vital network security and performance activities
- IT staff better able to manage own time more effectively
- Additional reporting and asset information for more informed future activities

"An unexpected benefit of BigFix has been the level of information we've gained about our own systems," adds Wayne Sims. This arose after Nebulas Security demonstrated how Sims' team could compile a comprehensive IT Asset Register and generate reports on individual machine configurations, providing a better picture of overall network performance.

SMOOTH INSTALLATION, UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

and configuration, virus definition updates, and the rollout of new applications. "Our installation went very smoothly, and was greatly enhanced by Nebulas Security's in-depth knowledge of BigFix and their understanding of our requirements," comments Sims. "Nebulas Security's level of attention to detail meant we got to grips with BigFix in just days, learning techniques which have dramatically improved the performance of our network."

Now running across Patientline's European locations, BigFix has met the immediate challenge – and more. It monitors and downloads all relevant patches, fixes and service packs from key software vendors automatically,

as they are announced. With minimal guidance these are deployed and installed on the relevant machines, providing seamless and synchronised maintenance, while saving weeks of time and eliminating error. It also acts as an efficient deployment tool for new and upgraded applications of all kinds.

The Future

The implementation of BigFix has greatly enhanced Patientline's operating system management and maintenance procedures, making them faster, more efficient and more reliable. Sims' team has not only reduced the time spent on patching and maintenance, but has also gained access to far better IT inventory information which feeds directly into future plans. At some future date it may even be possible to extend BigFix' capabilities to manage the bedside units themselves, creating an unprecedented extension of process improvement which will be of direct benefit not only to Patientline but also to its customers.

BIGFIX

BigFix: Breakthrough Technology, Revolutionary Economics

BigFix, Inc. offers the IT industry's only intelligent IT policy enforcement engine that enables real-time visibility and control of globally distributed desktop, mobile and server computer infrastructures. Built on a revolutionary technology platform, BigFix continually assesses and manages the health and security of enterprise computing devices at the velocity of change.

Without requiring massive investment in dedicated management resources, BigFix automates enterprise-scale malware defense, asset management, software inventory and distribution, vulnerability assessment, policy enforcement, power conservation, and patch management, without compromising network performance, end-user productivity, or security.

BigFix delivers outstanding return-on-investment through slashing IT infrastructure costs of ownership and management complexity while enabling IT organizations to elevate security configuration management from chronic pain point to positive business value resource.