

SWITCHING ON THE POWER OF BIGFIX AT ENTERGY



CASE STUDY 

AT A GLANCE

BigFix enables Entergy to meet and exceed end-customer expectations in a desktop and server outsourcing program at the company's headquarters and its wholesale market power stations in the Midwest and Northeast.



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KEY CHALLENGES

- Reduce the cost and complexity of server and PC management at a large electric utility and power generation company
- Meet stringent service level agreements for patch and software update compliance
- Cost-effectively deliver desktop managed services to the end customer

IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

- BigFix deployed as server and desktop outsourced managed services delivery platform
- BigFix designated the primary resource for patch management
- BigFix used as supplementary resource to validate Symantec anti-virus coverage and augment software delivery tools
- Productive coexistence relationship in the solution with Microsoft SMS
- Extensive use of custom BigFix Fixlet messages and content and ad-hoc inquiries



“Working together, the desktop and server management team and BigFix have helped Entergy accomplish its primary gas and electricity service mission more reliably and efficiently.”

Bill Parker,
Director of Desktop Services

RESULTS

- Entergy has exceeded SLA expectations since implementing the BigFix solution in 2004
- Patch and update services provided company-wide by one administrator, enabling other staff to focus on higher value activities

Entergy Corporation is mostly known as an electric and gas utility with service areas in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. The company is also the USA’s second largest generator of nuclear power, operating plants outside of its main service area and selling their output on the wholesale power market. Other vital statistics for the company include annual revenues that reached \$10 billion in 2006, 2.6 million customers, and 14,500 employees.

As might be expected from their multi-state service area and nationwide power generation operations, managing Entergy’s IT infrastructure requires ability to overcome time and space constraints to address the infrastructure as a whole. Entergy’s employees include a significant proportion of mobile workers and field service personnel. The company’s service area is no stranger to natural disasters, ranging from annual encounters with “routine” tornadoes to historic events such as hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In these instances, speedy restoration of utility services depends on maintaining IT service levels to Entergy’s widespread physical plant and field service organization.

Outsourcing Desktop and Server Management

In 2003, Entergy engaged with a systems integrator to outsource the company's desktop PC and server management processes. The system integrator recommended BigFix as the primary resource for patch management and as a supplement to other tools deployed in the engagement. At that time, the system integrator and BigFix did not have an ongoing business relationship. The

MEETING SLA EXPECTATIONS NON-STOP SINCE 2004

system integrator recommended BigFix for this role in the Entergy outsourcing program on merit after positive evaluations by the system integrator's technical staff.

IT assets managed by the system integrator via BigFix include over 17,000 desktop and mobile PCs and more than 1,100 Microsoft Windows-based servers. Managed devices are located throughout Entergy's New Orleans headquarters facility and over 250 locations, including power generation locations in the Midwest and Northeast. The BigFix installation on mobile computers includes over 600 "Toughbook" ruggedized mobile computers used by field service staff.

Meeting SLA Commitments

Bill Parker, Director of Desktop Services, leads the team providing management services to the Entergy PC and server infrastructure. "As part of the outsourcing program, we have committed to stringent SLAs for software updates and patches, promising coverage of eligible assets as soon as 48 hours after receiving critical updates from Microsoft. Using, BigFix we have never missed a SLA since we implemented the solution in 2004."

Since initial deployment of BigFix in the Entergy Desktop Services program, system integrator staff have installed over 3 million patches and updates on Entergy's computer systems and undertaken 26,000 other remediation actions. In one 24-hour period, the desktop and server management team installed 70,000 patches on Entergy's computers. "Our goal is to provide a secure current environment by distributing patches within days of availability," comments Parker.

Additional Roles for BigFix

In addition to meeting all expectations set for it in its role as the project's primary update and patch resource, BigFix has taken on additional roles in the engagement. Specifically, system integrator staff at Entergy use BigFix to provide "second opinion" validation of the currency of Symantec anti-malware software and Microsoft SMS system management tools installed on the company's computers. "We use BigFix as a helper to Symantec and other

tools have done what they said they have done. BigFix also monitors the infrastructure after configuration changes have been made to make sure that systems don't revert to unremediated states or drift out of compliance with configuration baselines."

BigFix has also evolved to become the desktop and server management team's primary means for ad-hoc inquiries and remediations to the Entergy infrastructure. "We've built up

our knowledge of the BigFix relevance and custom Fixlet message language to where we now routinely use it to ask the infrastructure questions about configuration status and quickly address the gaps that constantly crop up in an infrastructure of this size."

Industry Recognition

News of the work performed at Entergy, including the use of BigFix, has spread beyond the two companies and attracted industry recognition. The Entergy project received a 2004 Outsourcing Excellence Award from Gartner. Gartner also rated the Entergy outsourcing project number one in customer satisfaction, operational and commercial performance among 190 similar programs they surveyed in connection with the award process.

Summing Up

Bill Parker says, "I'm particularly glad that the success we've experienced has gotten attention throughout the system integrator's organization and the IT industry in general. Working together, the desktop and server management team and BigFix have helped Energy accomplish its primary gas and electricity service mission more reliably and efficiently."



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.