

The Air Force Pentagon Communications Agency (AFPCA)

THE AFPCA LEVERAGES ALTIRIS TO SAVE THOUSANDS OF MAN HOURS ON SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT TASKS.

ALTIRIS CLIENT MANAGEMENT SUITE
- Deployment Solution™
- PC Transplant® Solution
- Software Delivery Solution™

ABOUT AFPCA
The Air Force Pentagon Communications Agency (AFPCA) provides information systems services and capabilities for HQ Air Force, OSD and Joint Staff for military operations and missions. In pursuit of this mission AFPCA had already developed a fairly advanced desktop and server infrastructure.
www.pentagon.af.mil

THE CHALLENGE

- > Windows XP migration for 8,000 PCs
- > Reduce the number of client management tools
- > Patch management for non-standard clients

THE BUSINESS VALUES

- > More than 4,600 hours saved on new OS deployment and critical machine data migration
- > Comprehensive Altiris solution drives management tool consolidation while streamlining processes
- > Increase their TCNO (patch management) compliance numbers by updating machines that could not be reached using SMS

AFPCA SAVES THOUSANDS OF MAN HOURS WITH ALTIRIS

The AFPCA implemented a standardized desktop in 1999 and had been using Microsoft Systems Management Server (SMS) to push critical updates to their desktop community. The standardization process had been used to deploy thousands of desktops during a deployment of Windows NT 4 in 1999, and a subsequent deployment of Windows 2000. During these projects AFPCA achieved rapid deployment speeds (hundreds of machines per night) that reserved user data as well as ensuring each user received their custom applications after migration.

Even with these advanced processes, AFPCA turned to Altiris and Invoke Systems, an Altiris partner and technology consulting and development company, in an effort to streamline processes for an upcoming enterprise deployment of Windows XP. The agency also hoped to increase the overall efficiencies associated with desktop standardization post-deployment.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

As early as 1999 AFPCA had a rigorous standardization process that governed the configuration of standard software and additional mission applications for each directorate, as well as optional individual applications approved for use on the network. This process was implemented using a number of different tools, including a custom-developed application installation engine, a variety of application packaging technologies, various custom

scripts, Microsoft SMS, a selection of imaging products, and a custom version control system.

Mark Barrett, AFPCA contractor with Invoke Systems, said, "We brought in Altiris Client Management Suite to help consolidate the various tools used to manage the AFPCA standard desktop. Several tools have been eliminated and others were consolidated under the Suite. We also use Altiris to augment our existing Microsoft SMS infrastructure."

IMAGING

Barrett went on to say, "Deploying a new operating system to more than 9,000 desktops is an enormous task by any stretch of the imagination. Doing it without the right automated tool was simply not an option. We found the right tool in Altiris. It reduced the time our technicians spent at each workstation by at least two-thirds, it standardized our deployment processes and made them repeatable while allowing us to develop realistic schedules for our customers.

"In short, Altiris made our deployment a reality. Best of all, we've only scratched the surface of Altiris' capabilities....with a reliable systems management client like Altiris on each of our systems, we can press forward with changing the way we manage all aspects of our standardized desktop environment."

AFPCA standards require that a new image be produced for each substantial change in desktop hardware. To facilitate this, agency engineers developed a partially-scripted image building process to create master machines. Barrett said, "At various stages in the history of the AFPCA's standard desktop, this image library ranged from 15 to more than 50 images. This process ordinarily took approximately eight hours but by augmenting the scripts with Altiris solutions the process was reduced to one hour. Furthermore, AFPCA uses Altiris to capture all image files instead of maintaining two different imaging solutions to compensate for the limitations of each."

Bottom LB: AFPCA is able to respond to new hardware imaging requests in 88 percent less time.



ERROR-FREE DL PERSONALITY MIGRATIONS

During the Windows XP migration, AFPCA teams deployed images and mission software specific to each user to machines in a staging area. Barrett said, "The night before a user was to be migrated we would use Altiris PC Transplant Solution to capture the personality of the user's machine. The next morning a technician would deliver the user's new machine, preloaded with Windows XP, and apply the user's personality package. This shaved an average of 30 minutes from the old method of removing the user's hard drive from their old machine and then copying over all of the user's files and profile. Furthermore, PC Transplant captured many more user settings such as specific application settings making the deployment a much less disruptive process."

Bottom Line Benefit: 30 minutes saved x 8,000 desktops = 4,000 hours of saved labor cost. In addition, the customer experience was much more positive for AFPCA users.

CRITICAL DATA CAPTURED

By using Altiris Deployment Solution, AFPCA was able to capture specific machine data at the beginning of the deployment. This machine data was critical in assisting AFPCA project management with migrating from static IPs to DHCP which was a key component of the deployment.

Barrett added, "Without this capability, technicians would have had to write down the MAC address of each machine as it was being imaged, and deliver this data to the IP migration team to ensure proper DHCP configuration. This would have added at least five minutes to the process for each machine and introduce downtime due to human error and omissions. With the Altiris scripts, the IP migration team was given accurate information without requiring technician time."

Bottom Line Benefit: Five minutes saved x 8,000 desktops = 660 hours saved and no disruptions to the deployment process stemming from clerical errors.

Now, AFPCA is currently prepared to perform complete, in-place migrations without deploying

technicians. On machines with adequate hardware, the agency can use Altiris to:

- > capture the user personality
- > deploy an updated Windows XP image
- > configure that PC with the appropriate machine name, domain membership and IP settings
- > install the AFPCA post-configuration routine, which performs some more configuration tasks as well as installs core AFPCA applications that cannot be installed until the machine has joined the domain.

Barrett said, "This process, which once required technicians to be deployed in the field, can now be performed automatically, over the network, without a single visit from a technician. This saves approximately four hours per machine over the previous deployment method where a technician would have to manually pick up the machine." However, the time savings has been much greater as the agency's limitation on the number of machines migrated is based more on bandwidth and customer scheduling issues than technician availability. Additionally, the disruption to the customer is essentially eliminated.

Bottom Line Benefit: Significant increase in the quantity of machines that can be migrated simultaneously, decreased labor costs and greater user satisfaction.

POST-DEPLOYMENT MAINTENANCE AND PATCH MANAGEMENT

AFPCA also uses Altiris to push software packages and updates to machines that the current SMS infrastructure cannot reach. AFPCA uses SMS to push updates to its standardized desktop infrastructure. However, SMS is occasionally not able to reach all clients. AFPCA uses Altiris to push updates to the machines SMS couldn't reach. To date, Altiris has been able to successfully deploy to 95% of the previously unreachable systems using the advanced Altiris software delivery infrastructure.

ABOUT ALTIRIS

Altiris, Inc. offers a full line of Web-enabled solutions that empower organizations to easily manage desktops, notebooks, handhelds and Windows, Linux and UNIX servers throughout the IT lifecycle. Altiris provides fully integrated, complete systems management solutions for client and mobile, server, and asset management. Altiris' vision is to automate, simplify, and reduce the cost and complexity of IT lifecycle management with a rapid return on investment. For more information,



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