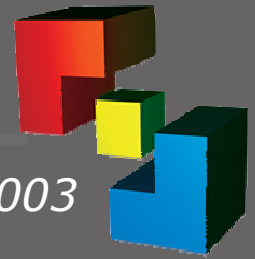




Case Study The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA)



Systems Management Server (SMS) 2003

Award-winning Microsoft Gold Certified Partner **The Henson Group, Inc. (THG)** designed and deployed a highly customized IT solution for The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) to simplify software management and increase security across AICPA's network of servers — enabling the trade group to reduce its annual software deployment costs by more than \$200,000, among other returns on investment.



Project Vitals

Industry: Financial Services

Customer Profile: A top trade organization serving more than 340,000 Certified Public Accountants spread throughout the U.S.

Business Situation: AICPA approached THG to architect a custom solution that would not only automate the deployment of software and track hardware and software inventories, but seamlessly deploy security patches protecting its systems from the latest viruses, worms, and other malicious programs.

Solution: To meet the dual challenges of automating AICPA's software distribution activities and increasing the trade group's IT security, THG's engineers designed a custom version of Microsoft's Systems Management Server 2003 (SMS) integrated with the Software Update Services Feature Pack.

Results: The automated process of software deployment reduced AICPA's software installation process by approximately 87 days per administrator, resulting in a cost savings of \$200,000 annually. And, automated security patch management will save the organization an average of 23.75 deployment days every year, which translates into a 75% reduction.

BUSINESS SITUATION

As the top industry trade organization serving more than 340,000 Certified Public Accountants spread throughout the U.S., AICPA relies heavily upon its technology to connect to its members.

Using several dozen servers linked to hundreds of client PCs, AICPA manages membership activities and data, while disseminating a steady stream of updates and electronic publications, such as The Journal of Accountancy, The CPA Letter, and The Practicing CPA.

While this infrastructure was functional, distributing software updates had become increasingly expensive and time consuming, especially in light of the AICPA's dramatic growth during the past decade.

Moreover, AICPA officials had become well aware of how vulnerable their technology environment was to viruses and worms that could silently work their way into the network from hundreds of access points.

AICPA approached THG to architect a custom solution that would not only automate the deployment of software and track hardware and software inventories, but seamlessly deploy security patches protecting AICPA's systems from the latest viruses, worms, and other malicious programs.

Considering AICPA would need a solution that encompassed desktop and server operating systems and also the numerous business applications it supports, THG knew a significant amount of customization would be required to achieve the client's expectations.

SOLUTION

To meet the dual challenges of automating AICPA's software distribution activities and increasing the trade group's IT security, THG's engineers designed a custom version of Microsoft's Systems Management Server 2003 (SMS) integrated with the Software Update Services Feature Pack.

SMS provides a comprehensive solution for change and configuration management for the Microsoft platform, which THG envisioned would enable AICPA to provide relevant software and updates to users quickly and cost-effectively. The solution was architected to allow AICPA to deploy new software to thousands of computers from a single computer. SMS would also enable the trade group to much more easily manage the vast hardware inventory of all its managed computer systems.



Although SMS allows enterprises to track almost all the software assets on their systems, for AICPA, like most enterprises, there existed a core set of applications and files that were of particular importance and interest. Therefore, THG's SMS 2003 solution was designed to enable AICPA to focus on the information they needed by providing the capability to implement intelligent inventory searches through the use of functionality such as wildcards, environment variables, and file properties. Systems resource overhead was also reduced by enabling the skipping of compressed and encrypted files.

Through the integration of the Software Update Services Feature Pack into Systems Management Server 2003 and by leveraging Microsoft Baseline Security Analyzer (MBSA) technology and Microsoft Office detection technology, SMS provides enhanced awareness of the latest Microsoft updates for configured systems, enabling enterprises to stay one step ahead of vulnerabilities.

This was designed to give AICPA a suite of software tools designed to quickly and effectively implement critical updates, while automatically detecting when machines are missing those updates. SUS facilitates the quick implementation of these critical updates, and provides a complete status report to ensure that all Windows and Office patches were successfully installed.

RESULTS

THG's solution provided AICPA with an effective enterprise hardware and software inventory process to more efficiently manage systems, as well as a means for more efficiently deploying its new software programs and critical updates.

The automated process of software deployment reduced AICPA's software installation process by approximately 87 days per administrator, resulting in a cost savings of \$200,000 annually.

Additionally, AICPA now has automated security patch management, reducing the deployment of patches to thousands of computers from four days per month down to a single day. AICPA estimates this will save the organization an average of 23.75 deployment days every year, which translates into a 75% reduction.

SMS 2003 integrates the key steps in update deployment are: (identifying vulnerabilities, acquiring applicable updates, determining target systems, and reliable update deployment) into one seamless process through the Patch Distribution Wizard, which walks administrators through the end-to-end update deployment process.

And, to ensure that the rich inventory and usage tracking information is easily accessible and relevant to the business, SMS 2003 includes a robust, highly flexible, and fully extensible Web reporting engine, with over 120 pre-built reports available out of the box.

Reports can be customized or created, and an import and export capability is available for transferring these to other SMS 2003 environments. server farms, electronic commerce (e-commerce) sites, and servers.

About The Henson Group



Founded: June, 2000

Headquarters: New York City

Consultants: 37 (including both full-time and part-time professionals)

Partners: MS, HP, IBM, Cisco, Avicode, Dell, EMC, eXc Software, K2.net, Netscaler, Network Engines

Certifications: Microsoft Gold Certified and Cisco Certified

Official Microsoft Competencies:
Advanced Infrastructure Solutions
Information Worker Solutions
Integrated E-Business Solutions
Learning Solutions
Networking Infrastructure Solutions

History: Founded by former Microsoft employees from the development teams in Redmond and Microsoft Consulting Services

Consultants: All MS Certified, most former Microsoft engineers, and each have a minimum of three years of vertical-specific experience

Annual Client-Retention Rate:
(2000 through 2004) 98%

Annual Client-base Growth:
(2000 through 2004) 50%

Company Description: THG is an award-winning Microsoft Gold Certified Partner specializing in deploying Microsoft technologies for U.S. and international companies across 20 industry categories.

Founded by former Microsoft employees from the development groups in Redmond and Microsoft Consulting Services, THG offers clients direct access to Microsoft's product groups and technical information often not publicly available.

THG's competencies include .NET application development, infrastructure deployments, Line-Of-Business solutions, security, product training, and strategic consulting.

Delivering projects in a fraction of the time it takes competitors, THG's proprietary project management process and attention to detail consistently produces a 98% client-retention rate.

Everywhere clients need THG to be, the consultancy has operations, engineers, and partners located in countries around the world that are committed to the highest level of client satisfaction.

To learn more about THG, please visit www.HensonGroup.com. For more information on how THG can deploy this type of solution in your environment, please call 800.980.1130 or e-mail Info@HensonGroup.com.

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