With 10,000 scientists, technicians, and support staff working in more than 400 locations throughout the country, the U.S. Geological Survey has unique challenges for managing and administering its widely distributed IT resources and networks. Because those various locations often have very different operational processes and missions, each office is responsible for managing and supporting its own IT requirements and resources. USGS licenses more than 1,800 user seats of Prism Suite™ from New Boundary Technologies, which is currently in use at approximately 20 USGS office locations, including the Orlando, Florida office.

Background:
The Orlando, Florida office of the USGS supports some 60 users with a single IT specialist, Nicole Bogeajis. Lacking an automated software deployment solution, Bogeajis had to rely on manual software installations for all systems, which was both time consuming and costly, especially when temporary staff were required to assist with large deployment projects. Manual installation of software was also proving to be a hindrance to user productivity, due to the growing amount of downtime each system experienced during manual software installations. Bogaejis realized that her office could experience significant savings in time, money, and IT resources by automating software deployment and other desktop and server management functions.

Challenge:
Because USGS scientists and technicians do much of their work in the field rather than the office, their computers are not always physically available to install software, updates, and patches manually. And when the systems are physically available in the office, manual installations often would keep the end users from using their computers while IT installed new software or performed other desktop configuration management tasks.

Environment:
The Orlando office of the USGS manages approximately 70 workstations and 5 servers. Of the workstations managed, about 75 percent are laptops that are used in docking stations for desktop replacement in the office but are frequently used in the field. The Orlando office currently has a centralized network environment, though in the past the environment was distributed. Even when the network environment was distributed, the office saved considerable time using Prism Suite to deploy software installation packages remotely, according to Bogeajis.

Solution:
Before licensing Prism Suite for its desktop configuration management needs, Bogeajis evaluated several other options. She considered using Group Policy Objects (GPOs), but found it was too cumbersome to customize

Organization:
United States Geological Survey
Orlando, FL office

Profile:
As the nation's largest water, earth, and biological science and civilian mapping agency, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) collects, monitors, analyzes, and provides scientific understanding about natural resource conditions, issues, and problems.

Situation:
With laptops comprising roughly 75% of the Orlando office's computers, simply getting access to those laptops to deploy software and updates was a constant challenge. Using primarily manual methods previously, the Orlando office found that manual desktop management tasks also created too much downtime for end users, which had a negative impact on productivity.

Solution:
The Orlando office of USGS selected Prism Suite for its software deployment needs. This allowed them to automate their desktop management processes and achieve a savings of approximately $100,000 per year.

Quote:
"In my office, I'm the only IT person for several dozen users. Prism Suite has allowed me to manage software and deploy in my environment with as much if not more consistency than offices with more IT staff. Prism Suite has saved my office in salary and both IT and user time."

Nicole Bogeajis
IT Specialist

.mst files or create custom installations, and it was limited in functionality. Bogeajis also considered using SMS, but thought the learning curve was too steep, and she considered it to be much more than was needed given the size of her office and IT environment. Bogeajis also had used LANDesk in the past, primarily for remote management of systems, but felt its functionality was lacking compared to Prism Suite, especially in the areas of asset management and software deployment.

According to Bogeajis, "Prism Suite is straightforward and clear in its instruction and use. New Boundary Technologies seems to understand the needs of an office like

mine, and how a simple yet effective product can be more useful than a complex solution. And all new versions of Prism Suite seem to add options that make my job even easier."

Result:
The Orlando office now uses Prism Suite for its software deployment needs. When new software versions and updates become available, Bogeajis creates a software deployment package and customizes it to her standards, including special configuration details like the placement of icons on the desktop. She then adds the package to the tasks in the Prism Console, and the software is automatically installed the next time the user logs on to the network.

"The greatest advantage to me in my environment is that since most of our user systems are laptops, all the new software is waiting for them when they return to the office," says Bogeajis. "As soon as they log in, they are greeted with a small popup telling them the new version is installed. It is quick and requires no interaction on the part of the users."

Bogeajis also likes that Prism Suite can deploy software to users who are already logged in without disrupting users' work or creating any downtime. As an example of the seamless installations she enjoys with Prism Suite, Bogeajis points to the ArcGIS software package. The software is several gigabytes in size and manual installation can be extremely time consuming and intrusive. Using a Prism package and Prism Deploy, the software installs automatically in the background in about 15 minutes while users are working.

"In a nutshell, Prism Suite has kept me from interrupting users," says Bogeajis. "In fact, it's so reliable for software deployment that I sometimes have to make myself go sit down and log in to different computers just to give them a spot check and confirm that there are no problems, and there never are. With Prism Suite, users just magically have the software they need."

In addition to managing the existing computers in the environment, Bogeajis also realizes extensive time and cost savings by using Prism Suite to prepare new computers for use. "When new computers are provisioned in my environment, I take 20 minutes to build a Ghost image. Then I push out Prism Suite to it and then just apply one of my three preset software groups – standard, advanced, or field. In about 15 minutes I watch the software just appear on the system exactly the way I want it."

According to Bogeajis, the Orlando office estimates that Prism Suite saves them nearly $100,000 annually by streamlining and automating desktop configuration management processes. This takes into account the former need to hire additional staff to manually install software and the downtime and inconvenience to users caused by manual installations. And Bogeajis has found Prism Suite to be a huge timesaver when transferring users to a new computer due to damaged laptops or system replacement.

"When that happens, I just set up the new laptop by laying down a Ghost image to install the operating system, give the new laptop the same name as the retired or damaged one, and push out the Prism client to it. After it reboots, the Prism client polls the database on the server to determine what software it needs, and within 15 minutes all the software that was on the old computer is reinstalled on the new one."

While Bogeajis uses Prism Suite primarily for software deployment, the Orlando office also licenses Prism Suite's asset management and patch management modules, and plans to begin using them more extensively in the near future.

"Asset management and patching are the only two areas in my office where I still have to manually intervene," said Bogeajis. "In the patch area, Java and Flash have become my biggest challenge and I plan to use Prism Patch Manager to automate and manage their frequent updates."

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