Case Study

As North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA (Automobile Association of America) provides more than 50 million members with travel, insurance, financial, and automotive-related services through its network of regional clubs. Serving AAA members in five states and the District of Columbia, AAA Mid-Atlantic needed to speed up its desktop and server management processes. The firm selected Prism Suite™ from New Boundary Technologies® to drive those improvements in its IT operations.

Background:
Managing a distributed network environment presents unique challenges to an IT department. For AAA Mid-Atlantic, one of those was managing its desktops and servers using a solution that had become cumbersome and complex. Escalating costs from training and maintenance as well as inadequate performance prompted them to reconsider using Microsoft SMS as their primary desktop and server management solution.

Challenge:
As a growing organization, AAA Mid-Atlantic needed to find ways to maximize the efficiency of its IT operations. SMS was presenting several difficulties. It was so slow and cumbersome for software deployments that the IT staff often found it easier and more efficient to send technicians to each office to install software manually.

According to Rodney Kovack, network engineer at AAA Mid-Atlantic, "Our upgrades used to include sending out field technicians to sites to upgrade software on each PC. SMS was very difficult and tedious so we would just send out technicians rather than create difficult packages via SMS."

In addition, IT staff was devoting too much time to ongoing training, and the cost of maintaining the solution, which included expenditures for additional hardware, was becoming prohibitive.

Organization:
AAA Mid-Atlantic

Profile:
One of the larger auto clubs in the AAA network, AAA Mid-Atlantic has 2,600 employees in Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, and Washington, DC.

Situation:
Managing 3,000 workstations and 250 servers using SMS was proving to be too costly, time consuming, and inefficient.

Solution:
AAA Mid-Atlantic selected Prism Suite as its desktop and server management solution. The organization utilizes all of Prism Suite's components, Prism Asset Manager, Prism Deploy, and Prism Patch Manager.

ROI:
Prism Suite paid for itself in one week.

Environment:
AAA Mid-Atlantic has a predominantly Windows environment. Following a merger with the Central West Jersey clubs of AAA in 2005, the Mid-Atlantic club's IT environment expanded to include 90 offices spread out over a territory that includes Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, and Washington, DC. Supporting a staff of 2,600 employees, AAA Mid-Atlantic manages 3,000 workstations and 250 servers in its widely distributed IT environment.

Solution:
Convinced that they could find a faster, easier, more functional solution for desktop and server management, AAA Mid-Atlantic began looking for alternatives. In addition to Prism Suite™ from New Boundary Technologies, the club also considered and evaluated other products. After evaluating the competing solutions, the company selected Prism

Suite as its primary desktop and server management solution. "In the final analysis, we found Prism Suite to be more robust and customizable, and just a better fit for our organization," said Kovack. AAA Mid-Atlantic uses the full Prism Suite, which includes Prism Asset Manager™, Prism Deploy®, and Prism Patch Manager™.

Result:
Shortly after licensing Prism Suite but before putting it to use in their production environment, AAA Mid-Atlantic faced a growing crisis when a Trojan worm infected their network, taking down workstations and servers and spreading at an alarming rate. Working as fast as they could to manually patch each workstation and server, the IT department was fighting a losing battle as the worm spread faster than they could patch.

"We had a full staff working late in the night trying to manually patch each machine," said Kovack. "But the Trojan just kept spreading. Since we had recently purchased Prism Suite, I decided to see if it could help us out."

Kovack used Prism Suite to scan every system in the environment and created a deployment package that would install the patch to any system that had not already been patched manually. Leveraging the Smart Update™ technology powering Prism Suite's automated configuration management capability, he set up configuration groups that would ensure that workstations and servers that had already been patched did not become re-infected. The results were nothing short of astounding, according to Kovack, as Prism Suite stopped the Trojan in its tracks.

"The next day, management and engineers were amazed to find out that I had stopped the spread of the worm and patched every workstation and server on the network using this new solution. Prism Suite paid for itself in that one situation."

In addition to helping them contain a potentially devastating Trojan, the AAA Mid-Atlantic IT staff was thoroughly impressed with Prism Suite's speed and efficiency in deploying software and updates. In its first planned use within the organization, the IT department used Prism Suite to install or upgrade Microsoft Office on several hundred computers. AAA Mid-Atlantic planned for three months of technical work for the project, but Prism Suite managed to accomplish the project in just five days.

"We've been very impressed with Prism Suite," said Kovack. "Between the Office deployment project and stopping the Trojan outbreak, AAA Mid-Atlantic actually had a net gain over the purchase cost of Prism Suite by eliminating hours and hours of IT staff overtime."

AAA Mid-Atlantic has been using Prism Suite since early 2007, and is still finding new ways it can help them improve their IT operations.

According to Kovack, there are many features and aspects of Prism Suite that AAA Mid-Atlantic intends to use. "Management is constantly requesting many different reports. With Prism Suite we can provide those reports quickly and easily because the Prism reporting engine is so robust and customizable."

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