Manufacturer Automates Endpoint Management, Help Desk Ticketing and Software License Tracking

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AGCCE gained control over help desk queues, software licensing, patching and endpoint management with the KACE Systems Management Appliance (SMA), freeing up IT staff for other duties.

BUSINESS NEED

AGCCE was ready to automate its help desk, its manual system for tracking software licenses and its in-house application for tracking hundreds of endpoints.

SOLUTION

Since implementing the KACE SMA, AGCCE has been able to unify endpoint management. The company can manage help desk tickets, run reports on software licenses, distribute patches and track assets anywhere in the company. Its IT team can now focus less on reacting to problems and more on pro-active infrastructure management.

BENEFITS

- Pulled multiple IT functions together in a single solution

- Boosted accuracy and reliability of information about hardware and software assets

- Freed up the IT operations team to focus on maintaining servers and infrastructure

SOLUTIONS AT A GLANCE

- Unified endpoint management

- Software distribution and maintenance

"I like that the KACE SMA isn't complicated. My staff can pick it up fairly quickly and use it properly."

Michael Grimshaw, IT Operations Manager, AGCCE

When your software licensing system is managed from a filing cabinet, you know you're ready for a new approach towards unified endpoint management.

AGCCE has 53,000 employees in more than 250 businesses that manufacture glass, electronics, chemicals and ceramics worldwide. The IT group for its European chemicals subsidiary supports infrastructure, users and assets in the UK and remotely manages IT in the Netherlands and Russia.

THE NEED TO CENTRALIZE

"Our biggest need was to centralize our management of IT systems," says Michael Grimshaw, IT operations manager for the Lancashire-based team of three support staff plus a project manager. "Freshdesk, our cloud-based help desk, gave us basic functions. However, we couldn't program it, and it depended heavily on email.

AGCCE had built an in-house application and database for tracking assets, but it wasn't useful for central reporting. Aside from that, it also didn't allow IT to control and check whether users were installing unauthorized software.

"Finally, we were managing our software licenses in a filing cabinet," says Grimshaw, "manually tying licenses to computers and ensuring product keys were up to date. That all took too much time and hard work."

FINDING UNIFIED ENDPOINT MANAGEMENT

When Grimshaw's team looked at the help desk market, they found plenty of dedicated products for logging and tracking requests. But they had trouble finding a product that covered the multiple areas of asset management, help desk, patching and software license management.

One of their channel partners recommended LANDESK, which addressed some of AGCCE's needs, yet at a very high cost. When another channel partner, Caretower, pointed them to the KACE Systems Management Appliance (SMA), Grimshaw's team evaluated and ultimately selected it.

"The initial implementation was fairly quick, with Professional Services guiding me remotely," says Grimshaw. "We installed the KACE SMA and deployed the agent, which started sending information from our endpoints. Then, over a couple of weeks, we configured the KACE SMA to collect data and update our machines regularly. Within a month, it was running on its own.

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FROM FILING SOFTWARE LICENSES IN A CABINET TO PASSING THE AUDITS

The first thing Grimshaw's team did was to load its existing software licenses to the KACE SMA and tie them back to the corresponding machines. Since then, it automatically loads licenses for all new computers that the company purchases. The results are twofold: Not only does IT now have control over software license management, but it also knows when employees are not using licenses that the company has paid for.

With a much more accurate view of shortfalls and excesses, IT purchases licenses only when needed. Also, the IT department is not afraid of being audited.

"Microsoft conducted an audit of our software licenses," says Grimshaw. "We sent them reports from the KACE SMA, showing multiple agreements that covered all of our licenses. The KACE SMA really helped us pass the audit."

EXTENDING HELP DESK "MORE THAN MOST PEOPLE DO"

Help desk was one of the original reasons AGCCE chose the KACE SMA. Grimshaw's team has created new queues that they

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Michael Grimshaw, IT Operations Manager, AGCCE

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

SOFTWARE

KACE Systems Management Appliance

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couldn't have anticipated and that their previous help desk could never have accommodated.

- **Support —** Naturally, they take advantage of the help desk functionality in the KACE SMA and use it to log support calls, status and resolutions.

- **New equipment —** They modified the original configuration to create a separate queue for equipment tickets. Employees in need of new equipment can request it, and the queue raises an authorization for purchase.

- **Change management —** They have a queue for service request and change tickets, so they can log any changes they make to their systems. The queue allows them to assess the risk of changes like server upgrades and track approvals on the changes.

- **Access control —** Requests for changes in permissions and access now go through a queue in the KACE SMA. In case an auditor should want to see a record of permissions granted and revoked for an asset like a directory or a server, IT can quickly run a report listing all relevant tickets.

"Altogether, we have about seven queues based on the help desk," says Grimshaw. "We've probably extended it more than most people do. Our ticket-based system on the KACE SMA gives us a lot more control and we can provide faster information to the business on which assets we hold and where they are."

ENDPOINTS RUNNING MORE SMOOTHLY, ALL ON THE SAME VERSION

AGCCE has also used the patching feature of the KACE SMA to address a common IT headache: different endpoints running different versions of the same software.

When users try to watch a video and receive an error message about an incorrect version of Flash, work grinds to a halt. They click on a link to update the plugin, only to learn that they have insufficient permission to install the update. That means a support call or ticket, which takes users time to raise and IT time to address. Another common occurrence is that Windows requires a mandatory update and reboots the user's computer at an

inconvenient time. Besides the productivity loss, there's also the security risk of having outdated versions of Windows or Flash running somewhere on the network.

"One of the most important features of the KACE SMA for us, is the ability to control software updates centrally," says Grimshaw. "When a mandatory Windows update comes out, we can distribute it though KACE to make sure that all of our systems are running the same version. And overnight, our users stop seeing error messages about problems with Flash or Windows because we control those updates centrally."

FEWER OUTAGES AND BETTER-MAINTAINED SYSTEMS

The KACE SMA has made it much easier to find endpoints running outdated software and install updates to them. IT uses the KACE SMA to find any computer that has not been on the network for 30 days or longer. That reporting function helps IT ensure not only that the machine has not been stolen, but also that it receives all of the updates it has missed.

"From a business perspective, I think the biggest advantage of using KACE is that our systems are up a lot more, and uptime is really critical to the business," says Grimshaw. "We have fewer outages. Our systems are better maintained because it's easier to control our software updates.

"KACE is managing itself with regular reporting. With the time we're saving, we now focus on monitoring infrastructure pro-actively. We can watch for problems before they arise instead of finding out about them once it's too late."

ABOUT QUEST

Quest provides software solutions for the rapidly-changing world of enterprise IT. We help simplify the challenges caused by data explosion, cloud expansion, hybrid datacenters, security threats and regulatory requirements. Our portfolio includes solutions for database management, data protection, unified endpoint management, identity and access management and Microsoft platform management.

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