



Shoppers Drug Mart Streamlines Security Update Process with Microsoft SMS 2003

Overview

Country: Canada
Industry: Retail

Customer Profile

Toronto-based Shoppers Drug Mart is the leader in Canada's retail drugstore marketplace, and the No. 1 provider of pharmacy products and services. Shoppers had fiscal 2003 sales of over \$6 billion

Business Situation

Shoppers needed a more accurate way to manage the installation of security patches across its Microsoft Windows environment, especially to the 350 laptops used by its mobile workers

Solution

LegendCorp helped Shoppers install Microsoft Systems Management Server 2003 to help streamline the patch deployment process, and proactively control IT assets and improve software management

Benefits

- Efficient security update management
- Improved network security
- Consistent desktop environment
- Faster deployment
- Greater IT inventory visibility

"The whole idea was to migrate from using the distributed file system in Active Directory to publish applications, to using SMS to set up a distributed repository for those applications."

David MacMillan, manager, office network services, Shoppers Drug Mart

Shoppers Drug Mart Corporation (Shoppers) is one of the most recognized and trusted names in Canadian retailing. The company is the licensor of over 900 full-service retail drug stores operating under the name Shoppers Drug Mart, or Pharmaprix in Québec. Shoppers needed a more comprehensive way to manage the installation of security patches across its Microsoft® Windows® environment, especially to the 350 laptops used by its mobile workers. With the help of Microsoft Certified Gold Partner LegendCorp, the Shoppers IT team installed Microsoft Systems Management Server 2003 (SMS) to help streamline software update deployment. With SMS, the Shoppers IT team can deploy crucial updates immediately and consistently across its 1,400 desktops and laptops. By automating this process, Shoppers is now able to pilot and deploy updates in two or three days, whereas before, it took over a week.

Situation

Shoppers Drug Mart Corporation (Shoppers) is one of the most recognized and trusted names in Canadian retailing. The Toronto-based company is the licensor of over 900 full-service retail drug stores operating under the name Shoppers Drug Mart, or Pharmaprix in Québec. Shoppers also owns and operates 49 Shoppers Home Health Care stores, making it the largest Canadian retailer of home health care products and services.

With fiscal 2003 sales of nearly \$6.1 billion, the company is the leading player in Canada's retail drugstore marketplace and is the No. 1 provider of pharmacy products and services. Licensed Shoppers/Pharmaprix stores are found in prime locations in each province and two territories, making them among the most convenient retail outlets in Canada.

Shoppers needed a more accurate way to manage the installation of security patches and software upgrades across its Microsoft® Windows® environment, especially to the 350 laptops used by its mobile workers. The company had migrated from a Novell platform in 2001 to Windows Server™ 2003 operating system with Active Directory® directory service, and the IT team was using Active Directory to push applications and security updates out to its 1,400 desktops and laptops.

Large software packages often took several days or weeks to distribute, and it was impossible for the IT staff to be certain how many employees had actually installed new software or security updates on their machines. That uncertainty and inconsistency led to unnecessary management headaches, and created potentially dangerous system vulnerabilities.

"We needed something to integrate with Active Directory to expand our functionality

and efficiency in terms of packaging and deploying updates, to give us a more comprehensive overall solution," says David MacMillan, manager, office network services, Shoppers Drug Mart. "We have a large installation of laptops, and our mobile workforce was not getting patched consistently – we needed another layer of defense."

As well, Shoppers was planning an upgrade to Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 and Microsoft Operations Manager (MOM) 2005. The company wanted to prepare for the upgrade by implementing Microsoft Systems Management Server 2003 (SMS) to help monitor its new environment.

"The whole idea was to migrate from using the distributed file system in Active Directory to publish applications, to using SMS to set up a distributed repository for those applications. There is more functionality within SMS for deploying applications, which really isn't there when you publish through group policy," says MacMillan.

Solution

Microsoft Certified Gold Partner LegendCorp and the Shoppers IT team installed SMS to help streamline the software update deployment process, and proactively control IT assets and improve software management in preparation for the company's upgrade to Exchange Server 2003 and MOM 2005.

"As Shoppers' IT network continues to expand, security is one of the biggest areas of concern – simply keeping patches up to date and delivering a consistent desktop in such a rapidly growing company puts pressure and demand on the IT staff," says Andy Papadopoulos, president, LegendCorp. "They needed a process to help them maintain patches and ensure consistent application deployment without a lot of human intervention. The piece missing from the

process in Active Directory was deployment validation, which SMS brings to the table by automatically notifying them when an upgrade has gotten to every machine."

SMS 2003, part of the Microsoft Windows Server System™ integrated server software, has features that are specifically designed to support mobile clients. For example, the Advanced Client provides Background Intelligent Transfer Service (BITS)-enabled transfer of packages, inventory and updates of client software distribution through SMS, so mobile clients are upgraded consistently with desktops across the enterprise. This functionality is essential to help Shoppers manage deployments to its large base of laptops.

LegendCorp built a pilot environment at Shoppers to test SMS, and during the two-week testing process also trained the company's IT staff on how to maintain the environment and roll out updates with the new solution. Shoppers began deploying Office 2003 upgrades through SMS following the test phase, with positive results.

"We had planned to roll out Office 2003 over a few months. SMS has helped us save time in deploying the update because it lets us know exactly what version of Office each machine is running so we don't have to run around asking everyone, and the upgrade is delivered automatically," says MacMillan.

Benefits

Faster Deployment of Software Updates

Microsoft® Systems Management Server is helping Shoppers reduce the time its IT team spends repackaging and testing software updates before deployment. MacMillan estimates that his staff is now able to pilot and deploy updates in two or three days with SMS, whereas before, the process took over a week.

"SMS is buying us an ability to focus on other needs of the business," says MacMillan. "It's tough to quantify, but I can say that now, instead of having IT staff tied up dealing with the increasingly cumbersome patch process, they are spending time on more strategic projects."

The solution has helped Shoppers meet its goal of improving network security by providing a proactive approach to software update management across the organization, and verification reports to notify IT staff once a deployment is complete. As well, the company is realizing added benefits from installing SMS 2003.

Increased IT Inventory Visibility

"We're getting a lot of secondary benefits from SMS, which hadn't been an initial focus for us, such as software metering and inventory control, and from a reporting standpoint, there's much more functionality than before," says MacMillan. "I'm getting better visibility into what I have out there, so now I can use this information to go back and see what people are using, and hopefully decrease our software licensing costs by getting rid of excess copies."

With the tracking and reporting features in SMS 2003, Shoppers will always know the location, configuration, and system status of its assets.

Easy Integration

The integration of SMS with Active Directory® facilitates bandwidth-sensitive software downloads to mobile workers – important for an organization like Shoppers, which has locations across a wide geographic area and a large number of mobile workers.

"Shoppers is an Active Directory shop, and SMS tied very well into its existing Microsoft environment – it was not a complicated system to introduce," says Papadopoulos of

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For more information about Shoppers Drug Mart Corporation, call 1-800-SHOPPERS or visit the Web site at: www.shoppersdrugmart.ca

LegendCorp. "The big picture is really falling together for Shoppers with the planned Exchange 2003 upgrade and with MOM 2005. The IT team is seeing much more value in SMS because all the Microsoft pieces integrate better than ever to run as an end-to-end enterprise solution."

Microsoft Windows Server System
Microsoft® Windows Server System is a comprehensive, integrated, and interoperable server infrastructure that helps reduce the complexity and costs of building, deploying, connecting, and operating agile business solutions. Windows Server System helps customers create new value for their business through the strategic use of their IT assets. With the Windows Server operating system as its foundation, Windows Server System delivers dependable infrastructure for data management and analysis; enterprise integration; customer, partner, and employee portals; business process automation; communications and collaboration; and core IT operations including security, deployment, and systems management.

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Products and Services

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- Active Directory
- Windows XP
- Office 2003
- Windows Server System
Windows Operations Manager

Partner

- LegendCorp

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