

Port of Brisbane

INTERNATIONAL CONTAINER PORT ADOPTS BROAD ALTIRIS STRATEGY

THE ALTIRIS® SOLUTION:

Altiris® Client Management™ Suite

ABOUT PORT OF BRISBANE

Port of Brisbane Corporation (PBC), a government-owned corporation responsible for the management of Australia's fastest-growing container port, is supported by a network consisting of 50 servers running Microsoft Windows Server 2003 and more than 320 client devices running Microsoft Windows XP, spread across four physical sites.

THE CHALLENGE

- > Eliminate instances of users running unauthorised software on their notebooks and desktop computers, even when disconnected from the network
- > Establish a consistent operating environment that can be efficiently managed from a central point, regardless of client location
- > Reduce the number of expensive software licences required for ad hoc use by staff members
- > Gain the means to inventory 100 per cent of hardware and software across the organisation

THE BUSINESS VALUES

- > 34 per cent reduction in help desk calls and almost 50 per cent reduction in problem resolution time
- > Total software licence compliance with the ability to move licences between computers in minutes and without the need for on-site assistance
- > Ability to immediately identify hardware components that are below minimum operating system specifications
- > Operating system and application patches can be deployed automatically across the entire organisation

ESTABLISHING A MANAGED OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

In mid-2006, Port of Brisbane IT Services Manager Dirk Hoffmann was given the task of upgrading the organisation's client standard operating environment (SOE) from Windows 2000. "I had established a managed operating environment [MOE] in a previous job; and had used an Altiris solution for its deployment and management," Hoffmann said.

After arranging an on-site demonstration of Altiris Client Management Suite, Hoffmann steered the Port of Brisbane (PBC) towards a close working relationship with Corporate Express, a leading supplier and project management provider of Altiris solutions. The result was a partnership between the two organisations that has delivered significant business and operational benefits.

ORGANISATION-WIDE CHANGES IN MINUTES

In establishing the new desktop and server operating environments, Hoffmann and his team worked in tandem with Corporate Express Altiris specialists who, aside from delivering knowledge transfer, provided crucial project management.

Using Wise Package Studio, the combined PBC and Corporate Express team created and exhaustively tested a series of operating environment builds that were deployed automatically and remotely across the company.

Aside from the initial installation of the Altiris agent on each server and client device, the MOE rollout and subsequent

management was achieved without any requirement for on-site attendance by team members. All that was required for final deployment was the use of Altiris to include each computer on a specific operating environment build package.

"One of the definite advantages this solution gives us is that when a modification to a build is required, such as applying a patch, adding an application or just fine tuning an .ini file, Altiris automatically deploys the change to every computer using that build," Hoffmann explained. "So instead of devoting most of our efforts to deploying changes, we're able to concentrate on maintaining a handful of operating environment builds, while Altiris looks after the rest."

TOTAL SOFTWARE LICENCE CONTROL

Gaining total control over software licences has long been a goal of PBC, representing the opportunity to establish total licence compliance and, simultaneously, saving significant amounts of money by avoiding the purchase of excess licences.

A typical example of PBC's ability to eliminate the purchase of excess licences is the use of Altiris to manage licence allocations for various niche products, such as AutoCAD LT. "In the majority of cases, AutoCAD LT is used on a project basis, with users requiring it on their computers for short term periods only," Hoffmann said.

Traditionally, this meant juggling seven individual licences, with IT support personnel required to go on-site each time a licence needed to be uninstalled from one computer and installed onto another. Because of the time involved in this task PBC needed to own all seven licences regardless that only a couple were in use at any time.

Now with Altiris in place the number of AutoCAD LT licences required – each costing around AUD\$1,700 – has dropped to only two, delivering an immediate savings of more than AUD\$8,500.

"Instead of manually uninstalling licences, we simply remove computers from the AutoCAD LT application store in Altiris," Hoffmann explained. "Then, to provide someone else with a licence, we just include that user's computer in the store. From an IT support perspective, the whole process takes a matter of minutes and is fully remote controlled."

GRANULAR REPORTING

At the hardware inventory level, PBC's Altiris implementation is consistently delivering benefits at various levels. By way of example, Hoffmann cited a recent vendor recall of notebook batteries belonging to a specific batch. Prior to the Altiris implementation, this would have been a time-consuming project for IT support staff, visiting each site to determine battery batch numbers for every computer.

Instead, Hoffmann used Altiris to generate a report that detailed only those computers with batteries belonging to the effected batch. "We knew in just a couple of minutes which computers needed new batteries and where in the organisation those machines were located," he said.

"Without doubt, the broad Altiris solution is saving us money, reducing IT support loads and, most importantly, delivering a stable computing environment that is crucial to our business running smoothly."

—DIRK HOFFMANN
IT Services Manager,
Port of Brisbane

ABOUT ALTIRIS

Altiris, Inc. offers a full line of Web-enabled solutions that empower organizations to easily manage desktops, notebooks, handhelds and Windows, Linux and UNIX servers throughout the IT lifecycle. Altiris provides fully integrated, complete systems management solutions for client and mobile, server, and asset management. Altiris' vision is to automate, simplify, and reduce the cost and complexity of IT lifecycle management with a rapid return on investment. For more information, visit www.altiris.com.

At a much broader level, the Altiris hardware reporting functionality is set to play a large and valuable part in future operating system and application upgrades.

"While we have no immediate plans to migrate to Windows Vista," Hoffmann commented, "we've already set up a test lab to evaluate its worth to the organisation. With the Altiris hardware inventory reporting, we will be able to see precisely which PCs and notebooks meet the minimum hardware requirements that Microsoft and our own testing will determine.

"The result is that at any point, we can determine precisely the number of computers requiring hardware upgrades, what those upgrades will entail – memory or video card, for example – and calculate a cost to the organisation.

"So rather than estimating the cost of upgrading, we can develop an accurate business case. Without Altiris this would have been based on approximates instead of hard facts."

PREVENTING ROGUE SOFTWARE

Altiris also plays a significant role in PBC's ongoing efforts to maintain a consistent desktop environment by automating the detection and reporting of unauthorised software installations.

"One of our users' particular 'favourites' is a popular piece of music playback and download software," Hoffmann said. "While we recognise the software doesn't necessarily pose a security threat, the issue is really about maintaining a consistent operating environment that can be managed without the problems brought about by installing errant software."

The Altiris agent software constantly monitors software execution on each of PBC's computers and immediately notifies IT support staff of cases where a user's computer attempts to run a program not included in its build. Instead of gaining access to the rogue software, the user is presented with a pop-up message advising them that the application has been blocked.

"Even when the user disconnects their notebook from the network, the machine's Altiris agent knows what should and shouldn't be run on the computer," Hoffmann said. "So at all times, Altiris is working to protect the operating environment of every computer from being corrupted."

THE PROOF IS IN THE NUMBERS

When asked about quantifying the benefits of PBC's Altiris implementation, Hoffmann cited the dramatic reduction in

help desk calls and problem resolution times. "In the six month period leading up to the Altiris rollout our helpdesk logged 3,112 calls, with an average resolution time – from time of the call being made – of around 45 minutes," he said.

"In the same six month period the following year, with Altiris rolled out, the number of help desk calls dropped to 2,022, with a 28 minute resolution time."

A major contributing factor to the reduced resolution time is Altiris remote control which is used by PBC help desk staff members. "Instead of a user trying to explain their problem over the phone, the help desk agent can use Altiris remote control to actually see what's causing the problem," Hoffmann explained.

"The real advantage is that if there's something wrong with an .ini file or the user has inadvertently changed an application's setting, the agent can spot the problem and fix it just as if they were sitting at the user's computer."

When it comes to the reduction in the number of help desk calls, Hoffmann stated that there's no single part of the Altiris solution that can be given credit. Rather, it's a combination of many features. "If I was to comment on a couple of the main features that I consider instrumental in reducing the help desk load, it would probably be application self-healing and the ability to roll out patches and SOE modifications quickly before problems start to occur on a wide-scale basis," he said.

MOVING FORWARD WITH ALTIRIS

While PBC has already achieved significant gains through its Altiris implementation, the organisation's Altiris journey is far from over. "The Corporation's vision is to be Australia's leading port: here for the future," Hoffmann stated. "With the implementation of Altiris, what we now have is a foundation for the future."

Part of the future to which Hoffmann referred is working with Corporate Express on implementing the Altiris Barcode Solution, which integrates with Altiris Service & Asset Management Suite software. By barcoding company assets such as mobile phones and hand-held Dymo printers PBC will be able to track the products through their lifecycle and request their return from any employee leaving the organisation.

"Without doubt," Hoffmann said, "the broad Altiris solution is saving us money, reducing IT support loads and, most importantly, delivering a stable computing environment that is crucial to our business running smoothly."