



Oldcastle, Inc.

Fast Growth Requires Automation

Profile

A leading manufacturer of outdoor building products in North America

Industry

Manufacturing

Network

- 5,000 Windows PCs
- 250 Windows servers
- 380 locations in North America

Solutions

- LANDesk® Management Suite
- LANDesk® Service Desk
- LANDesk® Patch Manager

Key Benefits

- Help desk ticket queue reduced from average of 200 to 40
- Tickets resolved 93 percent faster
- Auto install of SP3 saves \$48,000 in tech time
- Eliminates \$37,000 in annual imaging costs
- PC build time reduced from three hours to 20 minutes
- Reclaimed licenses save \$65,000 in cost avoidance

Overview

Oldcastle Building Solutions, a division of Oldcastle, Inc., is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, and is the leading North American manufacturer of concrete masonry, precast, lawn, garden and paving products. It is also a regional leader in clay brick. Oldcastle Building Solutions has 380 locations, primarily manufacturing centers, in the U.S. and Canada. Oldcastle, Inc. is the North American arm of CRH, plc, based in Dublin, Ireland. With 2010 sales of \$24.7 billion, CRH is one of the world's leading building products and materials companies.

Challenge: Free Up IT Staff to Perform Strategic Jobs

From 2005 to 2010, Oldcastle Building Solutions doubled in size and is still growing. That rapid growth put a lot of pressure on its IT department. "We expanded primarily through acquisitions," said Douglas LeBlanc, Technology Director for Oldcastle Building Solutions. "We went from being a very small IT shop to a very big one almost overnight. And we did this during a weak economy, at a time when we constantly had to find ways to do more with less. On top of that, we did everything manually, so we literally had our hands full just merging the acquired systems with our existing one and then managing the enterprise."

Technicians Overwhelmed with Simple Support Tasks

Oldcastle has eight help desk technicians, and all were kept busy doing tactical jobs like upgrading software and setting up users. "We had little or no time for strategic tasks that could help the company become more efficient and productive," continued LeBlanc. "We were averaging 200 tickets in our queue at any one time, and it took an average of 30 minutes to resolve the simplest problem. At the time, we needed to upgrade 1,100 PCs with Windows XP Service Pack 3 [SP3], but kept putting it off because it's a big application and requires a very long time to install. I estimated it would take 1,650 technician hours to do the upgrade; we just didn't have that kind of time to spare."

Point Tools Unreliable and Difficult to Use

LeBlanc did implement some automated point tools to help with inventory, but they were more trouble than they were worth. "The solutions were never accurate and too complicated to use," explained LeBlanc. "We have a lot of mobile users; about 3,000 of our PCs are laptops. The inventory tools never captured all of the remote assets and constantly gave us false positives. One report said we had 12,000 Microsoft Office packages installed, and at the time we only had 3,500 PCs. We couldn't trust the data so we stopped using the tools. If forced to do inventory, we would look at Active Directory so see how many machines were live, and that was our best guess." Without accurate inventory reports, the company was nearly defenseless when it came to software audits, and to err on the side of caution, it sometimes purchased more licenses than it needed.

With more mergers and acquisitions on the horizon, LeBlanc knew his department had to automate the management of the network to free his staff from the repetitive, time-consuming support tasks. But before he even started searching for a solution, he found exactly what he needed—by accident.

Solution: Replace Manual Management with Integration and Automation

"I was attending a tradeshow and signed up for a LANDesk session by mistake," explained LeBlanc. "I decided to stay once the presenter started listing all the pain points that LANDesk addressed; I was facing the same issues. I was skeptical at first, because often when a vendor says its product does so many things, it usually doesn't or doesn't do them well. But after talking to some of the customers in the room, I took the next step and the rest is history. We installed LANDesk® Management Suite on a pilot basis and saw significant results so quickly that we immediately bought licenses for the rest of our nodes."

LeBlanc wasted no time testing the solution with a big project. “We have 2,000 IP phones,” said LeBlanc, “and the computer client software for each one needed to be upgraded with an 80 megabyte package. When 2,000 users are downloading that big of an application over small Internet pipes, it has a huge impact on business. But with the LANDesk® Targeted Multicast™ feature, we only had to send the package once to each subnet, and from there it was dynamically distributed to each client PC. Our users did not have to touch the software, and it was the first time we did an IP phone upgrade without having serious downtime the next day, which always interrupted business.”

Helpdesk Tickets Resolved 93 Percent Faster

LANDesk® Service Desk helped reduce the ticket backlog from an average of 200 in the queue to a very doable 40. “Now that we can push software over the wire,” noted LeBlanc, “the average time to resolve a ticket is two minutes instead of 30. That’s a 93 percent improvement, which in turn produced an 80 percent reduction in our help desk queue. Our staff can easily handle 40 tickets and has plenty of time left for more strategic work. And equally important, our users are back up and running a lot faster than before.”

LANDesk® Patch Manager “Mysteriously” Installs SP3, Saves \$48,000 in Tech Time

The IT team’s big concern with installing SP3 on its Windows XP machines literally disappeared overnight. “I have a story that explains why we believe so strongly in LANDesk,” said LeBlanc. “We installed Patch Manager before we were actually ready to make that move. We didn’t think anything about it—until we noticed that it had automatically patched 1,100 PCs with SP3. We were shocked. We didn’t even have multicast set up yet, and it still pushed that huge package over the wire and installed SP3 without a hitch. That saved us more than \$48,000 in technician time. The incident really showed us the true power of this solution.”

Saves \$37,000 Annually on Imaging Costs, 90 Percent on Installation Time

Oldcastle is also seeing considerable savings on imaging its PCs. “We were paying our PC vendor to image each machine at the factory,” stated LeBlanc. “But by the time they arrived, we would have to patch them with the latest upgrades before sending the new machines to our users. We were basically reimaging the computers, so we eliminated the factory step and now install the image with LANDesk. That saves us more than \$37,000 a year. In addition, because LANDesk allows us to install a hardware independent image, we reduced our build time from three hours to 20 minutes, a nearly 90 percent time savings.”

Avoids Audit and \$65,000 in License Fees

As it turns out, LeBlanc installed LANDesk just in time for an audit. “Not long after we had it up and running,” said LeBlanc, “one of our biggest software vendors announced an audit. When we sent them our inventory report, which was in line with our enterprise agreement, they didn’t even bother to hold the audit. It was that easy. The solution also gives us complete visibility and control of our licenses. Our first inventory showed that 250 users with Microsoft Office Pro Plus weren’t using it. We used LANDesk to uninstall Pro Plus and install the standard suite, and saved \$65,000 in cost avoidance. Now, before we purchase any new licenses, we first check inventory to see if we can reclaim and redeploy any licenses.”

Results: Saves \$150,000 in the First Months

Oldcastle has saved or avoided costs totaling more than \$150,000 in the first few months with LANDesk. Plus it has improved the productivity of its IT staff, dramatically in some cases. “LANDesk has taken us from what I consider the Dark Ages and turned us into a more strategic IT department,” noted LeBlanc. “It allows us to focus more on growing and enabling the business rather than simply preventing the IT systems from failing. When I tell people that we can automatically push out software, many are unimpressed because plenty of vendors claim they can do the same thing. I tell them the difference is in the details. LANDesk will stage the software, wake the computer, and control the entire process from beginning to end. I haven’t found any other solution that can do it as easily or as consistently. And that’s where the true value comes in. Other vendors say they can do it, but LANDesk really does it.

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—Douglas LeBlanc

Technology Director
Oldcastle Building Solutions

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