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Computer Support Services,
Suffolk County Community College



Community College Deploys Firefox Using PolicyPak to Enforce Policy

Situation

With more than 26,500 students enrolled at three campuses in Selden, Brentwood and Riverhead, Suffolk County Community College is the largest community college in New York State. The school's Computer Support Services Group, among other responsibilities, is charged with providing hardware and software support to some 3,800 staff, including fulltime and part-time faculty.

The Computer Support Services group has a strong commitment to protecting security, which means it has long worked to ensure applications such as browsers and related applications including Java, Flash, and Adobe Reader are uniformly deployed from a policy standpoint.

“Without an easy way to enforce settings using Group Policy for applications such as Java, Flash, and Reader, we were spending a lot of time doing registry hacks or installation configurations in order to apply our policy needs,” says Drew Rabinowitz,

Associate Director, Computer Support Services, Suffolk County Community College. “The challenge of enforcing policy was made tougher as we looked to offering our users a browser alternative to Microsoft Internet Explorer. We wanted to deploy Firefox, for example, but were reluctant to do so without a mechanism for delivering and enforcing policy.”

Solution

While researching registry strategies for policy enforcement, Rabinowitz came across a mention of PolicyPak. He liked what he read, and suggested the group give it a try. The Computer Support Services group deployed PolicyPak to use for applying and maintaining policy across its staff and faculty users.

The group deployed PolicyPak as an on-premises solution, using Paks for Java, Flash, Adobe Reader, and Mozilla Firefox. The Group is currently considering making Google Chrome a supported browser, with plans to use PolicyPak to support it. A

major plus was how well PolicyPak complemented the LANDESK solution the school was using for deploying applications.

“We already had LANDESK for application deployment and rolling out patches,” Rabinowitz says. “Using PolicyPak we can configure those apps and keep their configurations updated.”

Benefits

The Suffolk County Community College Computer Support Services group—and the 3,800 users they support—have benefitted from the PolicyPak in a number of ways including gaining configurability across applications, ease of use, the ability to easily and securely deploy Firefox, a wealth of Pak availability, enhanced security, and responsive customer support.

Configurability Across Applications

The Computer Support Services group greatly values the ability they’ve gained with PolicyPak to configure policy across applications that had previously required hands-on attention through registry hacks or installation settings.

“You really appreciate PolicyPak when working with things like Java or Flash or Firefox,” Rabinowitz says. “Instead of spending time researching how to centrally change a setting for an applet like Flash Player on every individual machine, we’re able to just use PolicyPak and automatically send out a Group Policy update to all of our computers. It’s a wonderful tool.”

The configurability gained with PolicyPak also makes for a better, and less confusing, user experience. “We operate within an enterprise domain, and you don’t want something like Flash updating on its own,” Rabinowitz says. “We don’t give our people administrative rights, so we don’t want Flash or any other app prompting users that there’s an update when they can’t install it.

PolicyPak gives us a way of controlling auto updates. We can lock things down until we’ve had the opportunity to test and validate, and then we can use LANDesk to install and PolicyPak to configure.”

Ease of Use

In addition to being a powerful tool for administering policy, the Computer Support Services group has also found PolicyPak to be surprisingly easy to use.

“I especially like the manner in which PolicyPak handles its own updates,” Rabinowitz says. “We just drop a file into the folder and the machines auto-update PolicyPak on their own. This is a great feature.”

In fact, Rabinowitz finds PolicyPak to be one of the best self-updating programs he’s ever worked with.

“I’ve been working within IT for a long time—about 30 years—I’ve seen a lot of application deployment and updating scenarios, and PolicyPak is very well thought out.”

Ability to Easily and Securely Deploy Firefox

While the Computer Support Services group specifies Microsoft Internet Explorer as the default browser for its users, the group had wanted to introduce Mozilla Firefox as an alternative—but was concerned about its lack of policy control.

“Some of our users work with a Java-based ERP system, and frequently when Java rolled out an update, we would encounter compatibility issues with Internet Explorer,” Rabinowitz says. “We had compatibility problems the other way as well. A department might be using a Java-based form that simply wasn’t compatible with an IE update.”

Testing found that using Firefox would diminish compatibility issues, but the group couldn’t securely

deploy Firefox without the ability to configure—and easily update—policy for it.

“We wanted to put Firefox on all of our computers, but didn’t have the means to control it,” Rabinowitz says. “Using PolicyPak, after Firefox was deployed, it became easily managed using our existing Group Policy infrastructure.”

A Wealth of Pak Availability

The Computer Support Services group is currently considering approval of Google Chrome as a third supported browser for users, in part because the group knows they can use PolicyPak to enforce policy to Chrome, just as they do for Firefox.

“We are impressed by the large number of Pre-configured Paks available to us from PolicyPak,” Rabinowitz says. “This gives us the flexibility to add more applications while retaining the security and control we gain through Group Policy. Without the Pre-configured Pak I don’t think we would be currently contemplating deployment of Chrome.”

Enhanced Security

As with just about all organizations everywhere, security is always a top of the list concern for the Computer Support Services group, which values the control PolicyPak provides for browsers and related applications.

“Especially in recent years, browsers have been the focus of a great many security vulnerability concerns,” Rabinowitz says. “Last year SSL became a concern, there is always something, and for each there is a flurry of updates. We’ve been using PolicyPak now for two years and it has helped us to retain control of settings within a very dynamic environment.”

Responsive Customer Support

Rabinowitz finds value in the knowledge sharing of the PolicyPak user forums. And he’s especially

impressed with the PolicyPak commitment to customer support.

“PolicyPak is very customer focused,” Rabinowitz says. “Over the Fourth of July weekend I wanted to update Flash, and found the Pak didn’t work with this latest update of Flash. “I opened a ticket and tech support contacted me personally to confirm the issue. Before the end of the weekend they had issued an updated Pak.”

All of this has made it easy for Rabinowitz to recommend PolicyPak to his peers within the college and beyond.

“We work on the administration side of the college, but the people supporting the Grant campus educational side of the college face the same challenges,” Rabinowitz says. “I shared my experiences with PolicyPak and they decided to deploy it for the computers under their charge.”

About PolicyPak

PolicyPak is an enterprise software company with a focus on managing and securing end-points. Our software solves complex and challenging IT security and settings management problems, while providing affordable solutions for businesses of all sizes. PolicyPak reduces desktop management and helps ensure standardization, while increasing end-user productivity.

PolicyPak Software has been included in the Top 20 most promising Citrix Solution Providers for 2015, according to Enterprise Technology Magazine CIOReview.

For more information, visit us at www.policypak.com or give us a call at 1 (800) 883-8002.