GLOBAL ORE DISCOVERY

Global Ore Discovery Uses PolicyPak to Support Extremely Remote Locations

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CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

"PolicyPak Cloud just works. This ability to deploy settings to anywhere a user might be is an enormous benefit."

— WILLIAM EVANS
Information Technology, Manager, Global Ore Discovery

SITUATION

Global Ore Discovery, based in Albion, Australia, is a leading, mineral and energy geological consultancy with a track record for discovery. With a focus on exploration success for its clients, Global Ore undertakes innovative geological, geophysical and GIS analysis to enhance large and small exploration and development programs.

The company provides hands-on geoscientists to complement the in-house capabilities of its clients who value their unique skillsets and experience that encompass all aspects of modern exploration, from the analysis of metallogenic terrains down to drill-hole planning.

The hands-on, in-the-field, nature of its work means that most of Global Ore Discovery employees are located in the field, often far from the nearest town, which makes it challenging for the company's lone IT manager.

"With 90% of our staff in the field between South America and Asia Pacific, it is nearly impossible for me to physically access their computers for maintenance and updating," says William Evans, Information Technology Manager at Global Ore Discovery. "Even finding a time in which I can remote control to a computer to change a setting involves lots of coordination across time zones."

The company needed a solution that would help it administer policy for its users, wherever their work might take them. As Evans notes: "When I say in the field I really mean it—think field camps at 6,200 meters altitude with only a 128 kb/s satellite Internet connection."

SOLUTION

Global Ore Discovery found the solution it required by deploying PolicyPak Cloud. "We researched several methods and products as we looked for the best solution for keeping everything standardized with our diverse collection of computers," Evans says. "We finally settled on PolicyPak Cloud—which works great and is proving to be a huge time-saver."

Using pre-configured paks, Evans selects specific paks to meet the needs of specific remote users, and applies the paks though the Company Group using PolicyPak Cloud. The company is using 62 paks for PolicyPak Application Manager. The company is using PolicyPak Administration Templates Manager to manage 54 settings on the computer side, and 49 settings on the user side.

"We have already deployed PolicyPak to support 34 computers in the field, and we are expanding use of PolicyPak every day," Evans says. "As you can imagine coordinating any changes in an environment where most of your workforce has very limited Internet access is a big job, and without PolicyPak it becomes a tremendous burden."

BENEFITS

Global Ore Discovery uses PolicyPak to gain a number of benefits, including the ability to deploy settings from anywhere, gaining the flexibility to meet individual needs, supporting a BYOD environment, making life easier for users and IT, and enjoying tighter security through the use of whitelists and other settings.

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Deploying Settings "Anywhere"

The company uses PolicyPak to enforce standard settings and other policy elements for its Windows-based computers, as well as for the standard and line-of-business software of users worldwide—including support for Microsoft Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, and Mozilla Firefox.

This ability to deploy settings remotely is of special importance to the company. "We have 90% of our users in the field, and some 40% of our computers are so deeply in the field that they are not on a domain and/or are never able to be connected to one," Evans says. "And we must deal with two domains that don't communicate."

"Without PolicyPak Cloud, even if we could define settings the hard way—through registry keys and scripts—we would have no way to efficiently deploy these settings as most of our computers don't call back to the domain regularly enough."

This is just one of the reasons Evans values PolicyPak so much. "PolicyPak Cloud allows us to deploy settings and know that they will get to the computer anywhere," Evans says. "I don't have to worry about things like VPN connectivity problems, or group policy slow link detection, or any of the other problems we once dealt with. PolicyPak Cloud just works. This ability to deploy settings to anywhere a user might be is an enormous benefit."

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Gaining Flexibility to Meet Individual Needs

PolicyPak has given Global Ore Discovery the flexibility it requires to meet the diverse needs of its far-flung workforce.

"PolicyPak gives us the ability to define the individual strictness of enforcement of settings on a per-setting basis," Evans says. "Microsoft Group Policy has literally no concept of this. With Group Policy it's all or nothing. But with PolicyPak I can choose to deploy settings as defaults but still allow the end users to change them if needed."

This flexibility is important to Global Ore Discovery because many of its engineers are savvy enough to know how to change settings and have their own way of doing things, yet the company still needs to have a standardized setup beyond the use of default settings.

"PolicyPak Application Manager has saved me countless hours of manually configuring the settings for each of our software applications on each of our computers," Evans says.

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Supporting a BYOD Environment

With so much of its workforce in the field, policy and settings must be deployable across a bring-your-own-device environment. BYOD comes into play when engineers needs to use their own equipment, or when someone out in the field needs to pick up an additional or replacement computer from the nearest retail location.

"Microsoft's deployment methods work well in a typical office LAN environment," Evans says. "But with most of our staff we are lucky if they have a mobile broadband connection. We have several on satellite Internet only. PolicyPak gives us the ability to support our BYOD environment. We just send them the bundle of installers for our software and the PolicyPak Cloud installer."

Once the software is installed with defaults, PolicyPak does the rest of the configuration. "This gives us many of the benefits of a standardized image deployment system but significantly more flexibility and less infrastructure and license fees," Evans says. "This cuts the time to deploy a fresh computer by half. And I can be confident that I didn't miss a setting since it's all configured in PolicyPak."

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Making Life Easier for Users ... and IT

As the Technology Manager for Global Ore Discovery, Evans has a direct view into how PolicyPak is making life easier for users. Here are some of the examples from his own experience:

- The ability to use PolicyPak to establish settings for IE, Firefox, and Chrome settings, makes it easy to manage bookmarks and Java whitelisting across devices and geographies. "Now we can deploy favorites and bookmarks to our line-of-business websites that use Java to any computer—with no more complaints about Java issues." The ability to use PolicyPak to establish settings for IE, Firefox, and Chrome settings, makes it easy to manage bookmarks and Java whitelisting across devices and geographies. "Now we can deploy favorites and bookmarks to our line-of-business websites that use Java to any computer—with no more complaints about Java issues

- PolicyPak makes it easy to deploy force-installed extensions to Chrome including WoT and Adblock, (which Evans notes: "Users love this!") He has also used PolicyPak to re-enable PPAPI in Chrome (in combination with whitelisting and Java STIGs recommendations) for Java apps."

- Global Ore Discovery uses PolicyPak to enable companywide Internet Explorer compatibility lists and trusted sites. "Before PolicyPak, some IE updates used to break 99% of the government and bank websites in South America," Evans says. "PolicyPak really helped reduce support tickets!"

- Using the PolicyPak Microsoft Office 2013 Pak has greatly simplified the upgrade from 2010 to 2013. Evans says, "We use PolicyPak to suppress annoying new features such as the introduction movie and to bypass the confusing templates page."

- Global Ore Discovery is using PolicyPak for Allowing Adobe Reader & Acrobat to support verification of digital signatures using the Windows built-in certificates store. Evans says, "This means our company management can send digitally signed PDF's with their email MIME certificate without staff members being confused by an Adobe alert declaring the signature invalid, when in reality it is definitely valid."

Evans was pleasingly surprised by the user response he saw after using PolicyPak to make some minor tweaks to Google Earth settings—such as changing the Fly to Speed, and turning off Tilt while Zooming.

"Google Earth is a program that everyone uses daily in our type of business, so it was good to see how happy our users were when I used PolicyPak to change such settings companywide," Evans says. "I heard from users who were saying, 'Wow Google Earth is fast today!'"

Tighter Security with Whitelists and Other Settings

Global Ore Discovery is using PolicyPak to control Java whitelists companywide. "Java is one big security risk," Evans says. "We are using PolicyPak to lock down Java to the sites that we need—while allowing users to manually add additional sites as required. This works really well in closing what can otherwise be a massive security hole."

The company is also using PolicyPak to manage Internet Explorer's compatibility mode and trusted sites zone. "We especially like the ability PolicyPak gives us to merge existing settings, so users can continue to add sites to the trusted sites zone when needed—while ensuring that our default sites are always included."

PolicyPak is used to block macros in Microsoft Word. "This is a big help in stopping Word-based viruses," Evans says. "Without this security measure users can receive viruses which direct the unknowing user to do things such as disable their own macro security."

While blocking unknown macros, PolicyPak gives Global Ore Discovery the ability to seamlessly use the macros, such as for Excel, which it has developed internally and digitally signed.

Evans also uses PolicyPak to set Flash Player to check for updates daily instead of the default monthly. Evans notes, "Security is such a mission-critical area today, it is good to have PolicyPak to help meet the challenge."

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