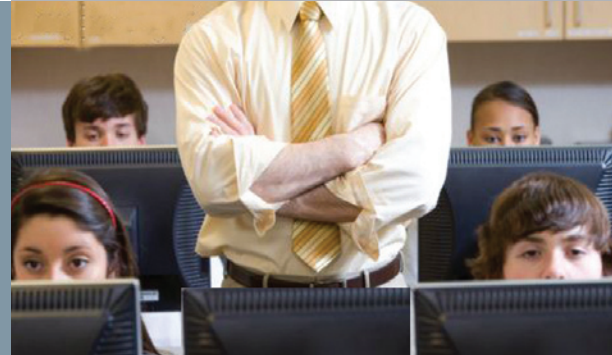


BIGFIX HELPS EDMONTON PUT EDUCATION FIRST



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Customer

Edmonton Public School Board, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, <http://www.epsb.ca>

Vertical Industry

Education

Challenges

- Reduce cost and improve quality of IT operations
- Reduce need for in-person service calls
- Implement a “Tech as a Utility” internal market business model

Solution

Thanks to BigFix, software upgrades and asset inventory now take a small fraction of the time that they previously required. The school system keeps much better track of equipment and software, saving resources and making it easier for staff to use existing equipment and maintain compliance with licensing requirements.

Results

- Reduced patch management staffing requirements from 3-4 full-time employees to one staff focusing on patches part-time
- Reduced bandwidth consumption during patching from 100% to <1%
- Eliminated need for laptop theft tracking service at \$130/laptop, while enabling recovery of lost and stolen laptops
- Enabled updates to be sent to, installed on, and validated on thousands of computers from a single laptop using a coffee shop hotspot

“We recently patched and updated 16,000 Microsoft Outlook clients overnight... this would have taken us at least a week previously.”

—Richard D’Amours
Senior Network Analyst
Edmonton Public School Board

Customer

The Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) operates a primary and secondary school system that educates 80,000 students at 228 facilities throughout the Edmonton, Alberta metropolitan area. The IT infrastructure supports teachers and administrators in addition to student computers used in classrooms, computer labs, and libraries.

Challenges

Days or weeks of staff time were typically required to upgrade software applications and collect asset information from devices across the school system. This drain on valuable time and resources drove EPSB to search for a solution that would automate frequently required management services, including software distribution, asset inventory, and security policy management.

Because the primary EPSB mission is education, not computing technology, the school board needed a solution that would not require administrative expertise or ongoing intervention. BigFix was already in place to distribute system security patches, and EPSB was excited about the opportunity to use the same infrastructure to provide the additional services.

Solution Overview

In recent years, the School Board has implemented a “Tech as a Utility” business model, where individual schools can contract with internal or external providers for computer management and maintenance services. While the School Board’s in-house Information Technology Services (ITS) organization has retained a majority “market share,” it understands that it has to compete for business against external service providers. Furthermore, the model calls for a single, all-in service charge to individual schools—and BigFix helps the ITS to contain costs and deliver the highest possible quality services to individual schools contracting with them.

Specifically, the BigFix solution allows EPSB to automatically distribute software, collect asset inventory information, and update security policies using the same single-agent architecture that was already in place for patch distribution. The school system considered competing solutions, including one that did not require any initial software expenditure. However, competing solutions required up to 95% network bandwidth during the evaluation process, compared to negligible impact from BigFix. But when labor costs and hardware investment were taken into account, BigFix won easily against all the alternatives.

Results

After implementing BigFix's software distribution solution, EPSB has realized dramatic savings each time new software is distributed. For example, the board had estimated that 55 person days would be required to install QuickBooks throughout the district. With BigFix, the job was completed by one person in a couple of hours. In another instance, an EPSB staff member was able to perform a 15-minute update of Adobe software that had been estimated to require a week of individual, manual, computer-by-computer upgrades.

BigFix Deployment Details

Likewise, BigFix enabled EPSB to eliminate a tracking service for laptops in case of theft—which cost \$130 per laptop—while enhancing their ability to recover lost and stolen laptops. While the earlier solution never worked, according to Richard D'Amours, Senior Network Analyst, the BigFix solution helped retrieve a laptop that was considered stolen but turned out to have been misplaced and deployed from an unexpected site. BigFix functionality allows a stolen machine to be reported to the ISP it is using or to have the machine's hard drive remotely wiped out to prevent data leakage.

BigFix asset inventory and management capabilities allow EPSB to track and more effectively use capital equipment—even devices that cannot run the BigFix Agent for technical reasons. BigFix distributes the scanning activities across local BigFix Agent-managed computers, allowing the system to locate and track even the printers, projectors, and video conferencing equipment that do not have an operating system.

For example, the IT services staff can identify Wyse thin clients, network routers, and DHCP servers on the same console that they use to control BigFix-managed computers. They can even monitor and manage the Board's 15 PolyCom video conferencing systems. The PolyCom systems cost up to \$9,000 each, so this level of real-time visibility automatically yields significant cost savings.

The BigFix automated software upgrades have helped the ITS department exceed customer expectations and enjoy unexpected benefits. During the QuickBooks upgrade, BigFix found numerous installations where the school system was running more copies than were licensed. The district was able to proactively rectify the licensing issue, which enabled them to avoid incurring additional fees for being out of compliance.

Additionally, BigFix Patch Management has reduced the time required for patching from weeks to hours, improving first-pass success rates while cutting the need for in-person service calls. According to Richard D'Amours "We recently patched and updated 16,000 Microsoft Outlook clients overnight. Outlook can be a very tricky thing to deal with, and this would have taken us at least a week previously."



Why BigFix?

School systems are always looking for ways to reduce costs and improve efficiency without losing critical focus on their major educational mission. Specifically, EPSB's Tech as Utility model raises the bar on their IT service level agreements, and with BigFix they can exceed customer expectations while cutting costs and improving security. By using BigFix to automate software distribution and asset inventory, EPSB is able to save weeks and months of staff time while making life easier for end users throughout the network.

The EPSB IT Services department originally used the BigFix product for operating system security patching. With the extensible BigFix system management platform, adding software distribution and inventory tracking was a straightforward and cost-effective move that involved minimal effort and investment.

Additionally, BigFix's custom policy-authoring capabilities offer differentiated value to the Board—allowing them to automatically implement ad hoc configuration checks, security controls, and other remediation techniques as new threats emerge.

Looking Ahead

Thanks to the unified BigFix system management platform, EPSB can continue to solve IT challenges by adding new IT services to the existing portfolio. EPSB will look for additional BigFix solutions that can lower costs and improve services, while preserving the critical resources that are needed to advance the Board's primary educational mission.

ABOUT BIGFIX, AN IBM COMPANY

BigFix, an IBM Company, is a leading provider of high-performance enterprise systems and security management solutions that revolutionizes the way IT organizations manage and secure their computing infrastructures.

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