

ENERGY USES THE POWER OF BIGFIX TO REDUCE COSTS AND MEET SLAs



Customer

Entergy, New Orleans, LA, <http://www.entergy.com>

Vertical Industry

Electric and Gas Utility

Challenges

- Manage the costs and complexity of endpoint management within a large, distributed environment without sacrificing security
- Maintain accuracy and visibility of asset inventory to ensure effective IT operations
- Meet Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for patch and software update compliance
- Maintain system resiliency and continuity to ensure critical restoration of utility services during natural disasters

Solution

Since 2004, BigFix Patch Management and Client Manager for Endpoint Protection solutions have helped Entergy IT staff deliver 100% compliance with Service Level Agreements. Through BigFix's ability to provide pervasive, real-time visibility of their 22,500 server, desktop and laptop environment, IT staff has been able to manage operational and security tasks effectively—reducing risk, complexity, and cost.

Results

- Improved operational efficiencies allowed for a reduction of dedicated systems management FTEs from 10 to 3
- Comprehensive, real-time inventory of all computing devices – down to specific configuration details
- Consistent 100% satisfaction of SLA requirements for systems management
- Distributed Server Architecture allowed for post-Katrina dedicated servers in New Orleans and Little Rock

“Using BigFix we have never missed a SLA since we implemented the solution in 2004.”

—Bill Parker
Director of Desktop Services

Customer

Entergy Corporation is an electric and gas utility with service areas in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. The company is also the country’s second largest generator of nuclear power, operating plants on the wholesale power market. Entergy’s annual revenues reached \$11 billion in 2007, with 14,700 employees providing utility service to 2.7 million customers.

The IT assets, managed by Entergy’s system integrator via BigFix, include over 22,500 systems that includes more than 1400 servers. Managed devices are located throughout Entergy’s New Orleans headquarters facility and over 250 locations, including power generation locations in the Midwest and Northeast.

Challenges

Due to their multi-state service area and nationwide power generation operations, managing Entergy’s IT infrastructure comes with logistical as well as geographical complexities. Entergy’s employees include a significant number of mobile workers and field service personnel. In addition, the company’s service area is no stranger to natural disasters, ranging from “routine tornadoes” to historic events such as hurricane Katrina. In these instances, speedy restoration of utility services depends on maintaining IT service levels to Entergy’s widespread physical plant and field service organization.

Service Level Agreements require that IT staff apply and confirm security patches to the more than 22,000 machines within a 10-day window. Prior to deploying BigFix in 2004, IT staff struggled with multiple virus infections due to lack of visibility into their distributed assets and how they were configured.

Solution Overview

BigFix’s Patch Management and Client Manager for Endpoint Protection solutions enable the Entergy team to meet their stringent SLAs. Since 2004 they have never missed a single patch management cycle, and they directly attribute this success to the visibility and control offered by BigFix. As Bill Parker, Director of Desktop Services explains, “We have committed to stringent SLAs for software updates and patches, promising coverage of eligible assets as soon as 48 hours after receiving critical updates from Microsoft. Using BigFix, we have never missed an SLA since we implemented the solution in 2004.”

The power of the BigFix Unified Management Platform has provided the necessary scalability that other solutions can’t. For example, IT staff has used BigFix since 2004 to deploy 4.9 million patches across their infrastructure.

BigFix Deployment Details

Since initial deployment of BigFix in the Entergy Desktop Services program, system integrator staff have installed nearly 5 million patches and updates on Entergy's computer systems and undertaken 26,000 other remediation actions. In one 24-hour period, the desktop and server management team installed 70,000 patches on Entergy's computers. "Our goal is to provide a secure, current environment by distributing patches within days of availability," comments Parker. And using BigFix Relay technology, IT staff can now discover, detect and deploy patches for home users and roaming laptops—regardless of the user's location.

Entergy also uses BigFix to provide "second opinion" validation of the currency of Symantec and Microsoft tools installed on the company's computers. "We use BigFix as a helper to Symantec and other tools. BigFix also monitors the infrastructure after configuration changes have been made to make sure that systems don't revert to unremediated states or drift out of compliance with configuration baselines."

Why BigFix?

News of Entergy's use of BigFix has attracted industry recognition. The Entergy project received a 2004 Outsourcing Excellence Award from Gartner. Gartner also rated the Entergy outsourcing project number one in customer satisfaction, operational and commercial performance among 190 similar programs they surveyed in connection with the award process.

"I'm particularly glad that the success we've experienced has gotten attention throughout the system integrator's organization and the IT industry in general," says Bill Parker. "Working together, the desktop and server management team and BigFix have helped Entergy accomplish its primary gas and electricity service mission more reliably and efficiently."

Looking Ahead

As the relationship between BigFix and Entergy continues to evolve, BigFix has become the desktop and server management team's primary means for ad-hoc inquiries and remediations to the Entergy infrastructure. "We've built up our knowledge of the BigFix relevance and custom Fixlet message language to where we now routinely use it to ask the infrastructure questions about configuration status and quickly address the gaps that constantly crop up in an infrastructure of this size." In light of the sophistication of today's IT threats, Entergy's IT group has seen the power of the BigFix platform add significant value to their environment. Says Parker, "I wouldn't want to be without the tool today."

"[BigFix is] so powerful, I wouldn't want to be without the tool today."

—Bill Parker

Director of Desktop Services



BigFix: Breakthrough Technology, Revolutionary Economics

Founded in 1997, BigFix®, Inc. 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. Based on a unique architecture that distributes management intelligence directly to the computing devices themselves, BigFix is radically faster, scalable, more accurate and adaptive than legacy management software. From Systems Lifecycle Management, Security & Vulnerability Management to Endpoint Protection, BigFix solutions automate the most labor intensive IT tasks across the most complex global networks saving organizations significant amounts of time, labor, and expense. Today, BigFix provides real-time visibility and control for over 8 million computing devices for 900 customers worldwide. The BigFix customer list counts many of the world's largest and most prestigious organizations in every industry including financial services, retail, education, manufacturing, and public sector agencies. More information can be found at www.bigfix.com.