

Case Study

OVERVIEW

Client:

Brookings Institution

Industry:

Research and Education nonprofit

Customer Profile:

Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Brookings Institution is a private, nonprofit organization providing independent research on public policy.

Challenges:

- Increased maintenance of aging IT infrastructure
- Elevated security threats
- Growing system complexity
- Greater reliance by the Institution on IT resources
- Increasing non-standard user requests
- Static budget and staff levels

Priorities:

- Enhance communication internally and externally
- Improve collaboration with other institutions
- Create higher levels of security and performance
- Maintain quality service with static budget and staff size
- Provide greater availability of IT staff
- Implement disaster recovery protocol

Technologies Implemented by Nortec Communications, Inc.:

- Microsoft® Systems Management Server 2003
- Microsoft® Operations Manager (MOM) 2005

Benefits:

- Improved Performance
- Reduced Support

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Information Technology at the Brookings Institution has grown significantly, paralleling the growth of the Institution's staff and mission. The IT Services group's ad hoc attempts to keep up with rapidly increasing demands resulted in a heterogeneous IT platform based on Novell NetWare for core server functions, Microsoft Windows desktop OS, and various applications on the network and desktop. To support current and future organizational requirements for Information Technology, Brookings sought an infrastructure that could be more efficiently maintained. Thus, Brookings chose to standardize on Microsoft Windows Server System, and deployed Microsoft System Management Server and Microsoft Operations Manager to reduce IT costs and improve security, management and performance.

Situation



The Brookings Institution is a 90-year-old, private, nonprofit organization devoted to inde

pendent research and innovative policy solutions. Brookings analyzes current and emerging issues and produces new ideas that matter - for the nation and the world.

Brookings' reputation for innovation and unbiased research mandates the highest levels of performance and availability of information. For ten years the Brookings network had been Novell- and GroupWise-based, initially supporting computer use primarily for word processing, e-mail, file storage, printing, and some statistical analysis. "However, during those ten years the Brookings staff ballooned [from 300] to 500 users, who required more sophisticated desktop computing, in addition to internet and remote access," said Jane Fishkin, CIO and Vice President of Technology at Brookings.

Brookings' IT Services group devoted an increasing amount of time and energy to maintaining an aging core system. They struggled with remediation of systems through a disjointed - often manual - reactive approach. At the same time, Brookings' changing institutional vision required enhanced collaboration, improved communication and higher levels of security. "The Brookings Information Technology Services group required a solution that would meet the organization's increased demand for services while maintaining budget levels and staff size," said Ms. Fishkin.

"Brookings began to grow rapidly in recent years as a result of acquisitions, its staff ballooned to 500 users who required more sophisticated desktop computing, in addition to internet and remote access."



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With finite resources and an organization increasingly dependent upon its network infrastructure, Brookings could no longer make temporary adjustments to the operations model; the organization needed a paradigm shift. The goals were to overcome the limitations of its obsolete network and to fulfill its strategic vision, with the result that Brookings would maintain its reputation as a leading public policy research institution in Washington. For these purposes, Brookings deployed Microsoft® Systems Management Server 2003 and Microsoft® Operations Manager (MOM) 2005.

Solution

After considering vendors such as Novell and Microsoft (and vendor-free Linux), Brookings chose a Microsoft solution largely because of its security and manageability, remote control of desktop capabilities, data security features, and ease of file transfer from Novell. "With a very small staff supporting a rapidly growing user base, Brookings was seeking a single vendor to support a single platform," said Ian Knight, Director of Strategic Accounts at Nortec Communications, Inc. "We were confident that Microsoft SMS and MOM technologies, as well as Nortec's expertise, would provide the solution Brookings sought."

Brookings selected SMS for application deployment, asset management, and patch management; and MOM for scalable operational management through event management, proactive monitoring and alerting, reporting and trend analysis, and system- and application-specific knowledge and tasks.

Brookings retained Nortec Communications, Inc., a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, to facilitate high-level management and monitoring of the system. "Brookings had an immediate need for a particular skill set. Nortec had great experience with the legacy platform, and cutting-edge Microsoft skills to develop MOM and SMS," said Mr. Knight. "It was critical that during this process, the information systems and resources were available to Brookings' scholars and staff."

"Efficiency and user demand drove the decision to move to the Microsoft platform; we achieved those goals, and have experienced vast improvements in dependability and supportability."

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Microsoft® Operations Manager (MOM) 2005 Implementation

- Nortec configured the mail server and e-mail groups so that IT staff can monitor changes, deletions and creations. Administrators receive alerts, allowing them to function efficiently.
- Brookings wanted to monitor servers both in workgroups and outside its firewall. Nortec installed the MOM Agent on all existing servers on both sides of the firewall. This allows the IT staff to monitor servers from a central location, improving both efficiency and security.

Microsoft® Systems Management Server (SMS) 2003 Implementation

- Nortec provided Brookings with desperately needed patch management by using the Microsoft SMS 2003 solution. Nortec also created a Pilot Testing and Production release solution for OS, and Office security patching to enable Brookings IT staff to manage critical, periodic software updates.
- To extend SMS outside the Brookings firewall, Nortec installed SMS Client to those servers and also created specialized patch management reports using SMS Web Reporting. These custom reports facilitate patch status communication.
- Nortec installed SMSWakeUP and Nightwatchman 1E products to handle patch management issues, and fully trained Brookings staff on the products for future patch deployment.
- Nortec created custom reports for Brookings to enable charge-back on licensing with real-time access to data, and developed several scripts to facilitate network administration.

“Efficiency and user demand drove the decision to move to the Microsoft platform; Nortec helped us achieve those goals: we have experienced vast improvements in dependability and supportability,” said Ms. Fishkin.

“SMS is absolutely a part of [our] daily activities.”



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Benefits

As a result of the migration to SMS and MOM, Brookings users enjoy highly intuitive software, an enhanced level of support from its IT staff, and less disruption in service. In turn, the Brookings' IT services group is able to provide its users the technologies needed to further the Brookings mission. With its custom reports, Brookings is able to access real-time data, capitalize on licensing charge-backs, and evaluate software and hardware expenditures more effectively. "SMS is absolutely a part of daily activities; Nortec provided custom reporting to our CIO: which departments are using what types of expensive licensing. Accounting for licensing is done through SMS Reports. We have real-time access to data, so we know what we need immediately. When buying a \$1,000 package, we know how many licenses are installed and where," said Jake Marshak, Director of Network Systems and Infrastructure at Brookings.

Before the migration, explains Mr. Marshak, "Brookings experienced 2-3 systems per week destroyed with spyware. Initially each rebuild would take 4-6 hours. With the new network, we are better protected against spyware and system destruction. We are more secure, and have saved dozens of man hours per week, just on spyware and security alone. With the desktop-deployment aspect of SMS, we now can completely rebuild a system in less than one hour."

With reduced system complexity, Brookings benefits from less maintenance, streamlined installation and patch management, increased security and an infrastructure that is available around the clock. "As a result of improved management infrastructure, Brookings now has the ability to granularly deploy security updates through SMS, Windows XP and Group policy," said Ms. Fishkin. And with improved reliability, administration, security and performance, Brookings has maintained its IT staff size while staying within budget and maximizing IT efficiency and productivity.

With this foundation in place, Brookings' IT services group can now work to implement three of the organization's priorities:

- Enhanced communication internally and externally
- Improved collaboration with other institutions
- Fully developed disaster recovery protocol

Completion of these projects will provide Brookings with the technological capacity to realize the true scope of its institutional vision.

For more information on Nortec, please contact us at georgeh@nortec.com.

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