



BENCHMARK GROUP ENGINEERS TIME AND MONEY SAVINGS WITH KACE™



KBOX™ eliminates costly billing downtime, time consuming manual software installation and maintenance for architectural firm

BACKGROUND

Benchmark Group, one of the top 500 architecture and engineering firms in the United States, is a privately held firm based in Rogers, Arkansas. Founded in 1978, today Benchmark boasts more than 210 staff with over 750 combined years of design experience. The company primarily works on some of the largest retail and restaurant chains in the world, with more than 10,000 completed projects to date worldwide.

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– Chris Blake, Systems Technician, Benchmark Group

“We chose KBOX based on features, support and immediate product availability. We went with KBOX and it met our needs immediately. We were thrilled.”

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CHALLENGE

Time consuming manual systems management tasks insufficient

Supporting this team of 210 architects and design engineers is a staff of six systems administrators, one of which is Chris Blake, system technician, responsible for maintaining all desktop equipment. Benchmark runs an IT environment that is 100 percent HP hardware and Windows XP for the operating system. The engineers all design on HP workstations. The two most popular applications are Microsoft Office and Autodesk AutoCAD Architectural Desktop. For more than 20 years, as the company quickly grew, the IT support team had relied on mostly manual and homegrown methods to keep workstations patched, updated and current with software releases and fixes.

Slow “sneakernet” updates like reinventing the wheel

“Depending on the package, we might roll out a batch file, a group policy, a remote executed script or we’d come in at night and walk around to workstations using sneakernet, finishing up 20 a week or so,” Blake said. “It could be like reinventing the wheel each time.”

Solution needed without extensive time to train and implement

Benchmark Group had long wanted to automate the process but day-to-day IT issues kept postponing any move by the Systems Support team to investigate a better solution. In fact, his ultimate goal was to have each workstation available to any engineer to do their work no matter where it was located.

“We wanted 200 workstations that anyone could walk up to and work there,” Blake said. “But if you walk up to a workstation with an AutoCAD release that is three years old, you can’t work.”

There had to be a way to automate this without breaking the bank, putting unwanted overhead on the corporate intranet or forcing his team to invest hundreds of hours in training and implementation, Blake said.

KACE TIME: BENCHMARK GROUP

DEPLOYMENT

One day

TRAINING

8 hour Web-based training

TIME AND MONEY SAVINGS

- 200 hours saved on a major application upgrade
- Downtime for billable staff: Eliminated
- Updates completed in minutes vs. hours
- No nights at work updating or deploying software

SOLUTION

Benchmark deploys KBOX appliance in less than an hour

In less than an hour, Blake and his team were using KBOX. “I did not expect to plug in and roll out to all 200-plus clients within an hour,” Blake said. “I expected at least half a day to configure. But we unboxed, plugged in, and loaded clients and within an hour we were able to roll out software. That was a nice surprise.”

No lost time, revenue for design and engineering staff

The return on investment for Benchmark Group with KBOX was immediate. Every hour lost to software upgrades, patches or fixes, means either the loss of time that a designer could be working for the clients, or time IT staff could spend with their families.

Blake said "With the release of a large software package that might take upwards of an hour to install individually at a workstation the team saves a lot of time and energy with KBOX. It also ensures uniformity and reduces human error to almost zero."

200 hours saved in one major upgrade

AutoCAD is a major package at Benchmark Group; and it's rather large. "We plan to save about 200 man hours for just one upgrade/ install later in 2006" Blake said. "KBOX just pretty much paid for itself with one rollout." Benchmark relies on third-party applications to do many things. Those applications sometimes require about 10 minutes every morning for an application update. KBOX can perform these tasks automatically every night, Blake said, so even this short bit of time can total daily into more billable hours per designer.

Nighttime systems management chores a thing of the past

"For us, the overall ROI is that we are not interrupting staff," Blake said. "That's the payoff. They can continue working and support staff can still go home at night and see their families."

The key features Blake values in KBOX include automating patch management and software installation, inventory, automatic filtering, and grouping with the ability to take action for enforcement of policies, support, and the ability to push out about any software format to clients. Benchmark's IT staff manages more than 700 titles (version variations included).

Comprehensive control, roll out eliminates need for software monitoring

"One thing that I've grown attached to is automatic filtering. Often we see 'drive-by installs,' where an unwanted package arrives

with a good one, or users simply want a new toy. When prohibited software appears in a filter that I've created, KBOX uninstalls it for me and I never have to interrupt anyone or my schedule to remove it."

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"The biggest thing for me is that if I can't automatically roll out every installation of software, then I don't want the product," Blake said. "To date, I have not had anything that the KBOX couldn't roll out; coupled with KACE's staff, KBOX has made my job much easier because I no longer have to monitor certain items and I know I can call for help if needed." Based on their experience automating software management at Benchmark, Blake said his team is now evaluating the KBOX module for help desk support, and utilizing the license management/compliance features.

Timely KACE support speeds problem resolution

Blake said he likes having "one throat to choke" with KACE and KBOX. "With all of these support tools in one package I can find the information I need quickly which is a real benefit to my client- the users."

"The support that KACE offers to every customer takes it an extra step. We are a small team supporting a large one. KACE promises that if they can't help you figure something out, they'll do it for you. KACE's staff has made my job much easier. I personally appreciate the decreased number of nights spent at work monitoring or deploying software manually."

SAVE TIME AND MONEY WITH KBOX SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT APPLIANCE

Faster System Evaluation and Justification

- No time away from daily tasks required for KBOX evaluation
- No hardware/software pre-requisites required

Accelerated System Test and Acquisition

- Immediate product availability

Streamlined Deployment and Training

- Plug and play installation
- KBOX deployed to 200 clients in less than one hour
- Eliminated need for costly, time consuming off-site training

Immediate ROI

- 200 hours saved on one major upgrade
- Elimination of downtime negatively impacting billable staff
- Software updates accomplished in minutes, not hours
- Human error reduced to almost zero



1616 North Shoreline Boulevard
Mountain View, CA 94043
877-MGMT-DONE Main
650-316-1050 International
650-649-1806 Fax

www.kace.com
info@kace.com

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