

Rogers reduces cost of desktop “communication” and management with Dell KACE Virtual Appliance



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*Scott Baehr,
Systems Administrator,
Rogers Retail*

Customer Profile

Industry:	Telecommunications
Country:	Canada
Employees:	28,000
Web:	www.rogers.com

Business Need

The complexity of tying 450 remote sites together made several critical IT maintenance tasks difficult to accomplish. Two IT staff members tracked IT investments at each store using manual methods, which required store employees to input updated information about the hardware and software running in each store. Using this method to track 2,100 end-points proved time consuming and inexact. Software deployment was also a challenge for the Rogers IT team.

Solution

The Dell KACE™ VK1000 Management Appliance gave the IT team visibility into the overall infrastructure of Rogers, specifically into each individual POS system. This was key because the two-person IT team was now able to push out software, security updates and configuration scripts, and see first-hand when each machine was up-to-date—with no extra work from the retail employees.



Save Time.
Save Your Organization Money.

- Almost 2,000 IT team hours saved in software deployment, configuration management and inventory management
- Less than one year for payback of investment
- 50% reduction in software distribution time, with added visibility into the software and applications running in every store
- 65% reduction in time spent performing end-point configuration management
- Easy, quick connection to 2,100 Rogers POS machines via single, integrated virtual appliance
- One day installation
- Less than one week required for training

Rogers Retail, which markets the services of Rogers Communications' four lines of business, as well as entertainment stores offering movie and game rentals and also sales, is a vast operation of 450 stand-alone stores spread throughout Canada. Tying the stores together in a fully networked fashion was an especially challenging situation due to the stores' locations. In 2008, it became the duty of two Rogers IT department team members working at the corporate office in Richmond, B.C. to take over service and management responsibilities of more than 2,000 POS machines operated by more than 4,000 employees.

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Quality of service is imperative for Rogers because any service outage could affect millions of customers and lead to major negative financial implications. Providing Canada coast-to-coast service, Rogers Retail provides top-of-class cable, wireless, telecommunications and entertainment services. Some stores are located in remote locales across Canada so in-person visits by the IT team for routine maintenance to these areas was not time, nor cost effective. Given this, retail employees were previously relied upon to make sure inventory was up-to-date and that important security and software updates were successful deployed.

Geography, Complexity Increase Systems Management Challenges

The vast IT infrastructure and the complexity of tying the 450 remote sites together made several critical IT maintenance tasks difficult to accomplish. The team tracked IT investments at each store using manual methods, which required store employees to input updated information about the hardware and software running in each store. Using this method to track 2,100 end-points proved not only time consuming, but reporting was less than exact.

Software deployment was also a challenge for the Rogers IT team. Previously, the team relied on a third party vendor's file transfer package to push out new software, but the technology proved to be inconsistent. Given this set up, administrators' visibility into each of the store's infrastructure stopped at the individual store server so it wasn't always known if important software or security updates successfully made it on to each machine.

Given this, the Rogers IT team was forced to rely on retail employees to let them know if a computer was updated or not. And, often times reporting wasn't timely or accurate. A typical scenario was the Windows updates went through to the 2,100 POS machines in the evening, when stores were closed. The next morning, however, it was up to store employees to reboot the computers – a requirement for the

Technology at Work

Solutions

Dell KACE™ VK1000 Management Appliance

update to actually become effective. Store employees were sometimes skipping this critical step and therefore patches were not being successfully installed. Additionally, there were also instances of employees uploading non-standard Web applications onto the POS machines, which caused security concerns.

Members of the already time-strapped IT department were forced to remotely access these machines to ensure that they were updated with the correct software.

"We needed to send out important files and updates, such as price changes, to our remote stores and know they actually made it to their destination," said Scott Baehr, systems administrator at Rogers Retail. "Our previous technology could show us the files were sent, but we couldn't know for certain they made it to all systems. Given this, we had to rely on store staff to inform us of any problems. We have a large computer network and keeping our infrastructure tied together and correctly 'talking' is key for our success. We needed more transparency and better reporting so we could be more proactive in our approach—it was high time for a change."

Easy-to-use Management Appliance Tying Together A Vast And Remote Infrastructure

The Rogers IT team began its technology replacement process by evaluating several offerings from leading vendors in the space. The team sought out a cost-effective solution, but one that didn't require hours of training and could fit within the existing infrastructure. After a thorough evaluation of all the available options, Baehr and the Rogers IT team decided to go with a Dell KACE Virtual Appliance

to manage its 2,100 POS systems at Rogers' country-wide retail stores. The Dell KACE Virtual Appliance was selected for its ease of use, low cost point and ease of deployment. The Dell KACE Virtual Appliance fit in perfectly with the virtual environment Rogers already had in place.

"Other management solutions that we looked at took a full week just to prep the server and install the software," Baehr said. "The Dell KACE Virtual Appliance deployed in a half hour and was ready to go! The Dell KACE Virtual Appliance also integrated so well with our servers, it was a perfect marriage. Looking back at the ROI, our Dell KACE Virtual Appliance investment paid for itself in less than one year."

The Dell KACE Virtual Appliance immediately gave the IT team visibility into the overall infrastructure of Rogers, specifically into each individual POS system. This was key because the two-person IT team was now able to push out software, security updates and configuration scripts, and see first-hand when each machine was up-to-date—with no extra work from the retail employees. In all, Baehr estimates Rogers saved almost 2,000 IT hours on these tasks alone in the first year of using the virtual appliance.

Configuration management is another critical area for Rogers. The virtual appliance has helped the team save significant time and money managing configurations in an automated, policy-based fashion. Now, scripts are easily and quickly sent out to each POS ensuring they are up-to-date with standard applications and protocols. For instance, the IT team was having problems with retail employees downloading non-standard and unsecure Web applications, such as Limewire.

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Using the Dell KACE Virtual Appliance, Roger's IT team can automatically detect non-standard software and immediately uninstall it. It's estimated the Dell KACE Virtual Appliance reduced the time spent on configuration management by 65 percent in the first year alone.

"It was necessary for us to push the latest version of iTunes out to every store in a small amount of time and the Dell KACE Virtual Appliance performed

beautifully. The Dell KACE Virtual Appliance helped us to deploy the iTunes project in record time," Baehr said. "The virtual appliance is so flexible the things we are able to do are limited only by our imaginations and ingenuity. Dell KACE Virtual Appliance time and money savings over the first year alone has made the investment worth it. In the end, our customers see better service due to our Dell KACE Virtual Appliance."



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