



> Customer Case Study Education

Configuresoft Enterprise Configuration Manager Enables Cross Platform Continuous Compliance to a Leading Provider of Higher Education

Business Situation

With such a distributed environment of locations and users, a leading provider of higher education faced a formidable task in achieving compliance with its internal security policies, industry best practices and federal regulations, specifically Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX). In order to pass its SOX audits, the company needed to gain better control of its systems and ensure the integrity of its data.

“Our company saw the regulatory train heading down the track, and we wanted to make sure we were ahead of it. Had we not started when we did, we would need more resources and more time,” said the director of corporate hosting.

The company needed an accurate, reliable and efficient method to secure and update its 953 servers running on Microsoft Windows, UNIX and Linux, while ensuring continuous compliance to SOX. Due to the size and complexity of this infrastructure, it was difficult to consistently ensure security patches were implemented correctly or machines were properly configured and reported to the compliance and audit group in a timely fashion.

“To support 300,000 students worldwide requires continuous security and regulatory compliance assessment. Without ECM, it would be impossible.”

ECM Gives Auditors Verification

Providing monthly and quarterly compliance reports for Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) meant a team of 10 needed one full week to verify systems were in compliance with SOX regulations. To fix this, the company decided to manage their IT systems the same way they run the business. They abandoned traditional means of manually managing their network infrastructure and sought Configuresoft for a continuous compliance solution. With Enterprise Configuration Manager (ECM), administrative work for compliance reporting was reduced from 400 to two hours.

To meet SOX audit and compliance requirements, the company deployed Enterprise Configuration Manager (ECM) and its add-on patch management module, Security Update Manager (SUM), to collect security data from servers, develop an action plan to fix existing problems and develop best practices to prevent reoccurrences. By focusing on proper internal controls and auditing, the company not only conducts the required due diligence to comply with the regulations, but more importantly, maintains better performance in the long run.

Whether on the Windows side or the UNIX side, auditors want to see if systems are up-to-date with the current patches. The way to identify that is by going out to the portal and creating a report. **“The great thing about that – it’s automated. We are able to go out there and get a summary report and file that with our auditors on a monthly basis. That happens monthly and quarterly.”**

**THE
BOTTOM LINE
SOLUTION**

ECM helped a leading provider of higher education streamline many of its tasks and helped cut the use of manual resources for patch management, software inventory, compliance management, password rotation and access reporting. They estimate their monthly cost savings at 676 hours, over \$27,000.

Using ECM, they collect the most detailed critical configuration data from every Windows, UNIX and Linux workstation and server on the network. This comprehensive data collection and auditing capability consolidates that information in a centralized SQL database to a single view for immediate access, analysis and reporting. ECM is a standard for not only the corporate office, but also for all the business units who have relationships with the parent company.

“One thing that convinced us of ECM’s value was its ease of use and reporting capabilities. Overall it had a lot of other features that as we moved along really helped us in many ways, such as resource and people management. Once we implemented this we were able to cut down on the resources and automate the compliance process.”

Ensure Compliance; Real Savings

A Senior Systems Administrator for the company noted, **“ECM gave me my weekends back. The great thing about this is that we can actually go out and deploy a patch, transparent to the user, and when we are ready we can reboot them on the weekend without impacting the business.”**

ECM has helped streamline many of the company’s tasks and helped cut the use of manual resources for patch management. The proof is in the numbers:

Process/Task	Manual Hours	ECM Hours	Saved Hours
Patch Management	120	2	118
Software Inventory	40	2	38
Compliance Template	400	2	398
Password Rotation	110	2	108
Access Reporting	16	2	14

- > **676 hours saved each month**
- > **\$27,040 dollars saved each month (@ \$40/Hour)**
- > **This translates to a savings of \$324,480 per year**

Maintaining an accurate inventory of software deployed on Windows, UNIX and Linux-based machines was a time consuming task, requiring engineers spend an entire day collecting information from the machines on the network and compiling all the data. Using the information gathered by ECM, an accurate software inventory is available in just two hours. The company also monitors the software that is installed on the network and quickly identifies and removes unauthorized software applications.

By setting up rules within ECM, System Administrators are alerted to compliance gaps. To do this, they must understand what they actually have versus what they want to have, coupled with the ability to remediate problems across the enterprise. ECM simplifies operational, regulatory and security compliance, and mitigates the risks associated with making enterprise configuration and security changes.

ECM Up and Down the Organization to Streamline Operations

Right now, the company is creating a report that verifies privileges for users that have access to the UNIX and Linux systems. That is an audit point as well. Normally, this takes administrators two weeks to do manually since they have to go to each UNIX and Linux machine to run the report, put it into a readable format and access the right data. Using ECM, they will now have the information automatically and in seconds.

ECM provides visibility up the chain. The ultimate goal is to place the SOX reporting into one owner’s hands – independent of platform. ECM bridges the gap between network administrators for multiple platforms. One common reporting tool provides reporting and remediation for multiple platforms instead of many administrators reporting on their individual systems. **“ECM makes compliance reporting easy. One tool spans cross-platforms.”**

“We are trying to move to a point where we are not constrained by going across departments to meet Sarbanes Oxley – ECM is giving us this.”

Using Configuresoft ECM to automate the management of configuration settings for Windows, UNIX and Linux-based servers to enforce security and IT standards, the company is now able to enforce security policies without human intervention by automatically resetting configurations to their pre-defined standard when they are inadvertently changed. This ensures the organization is in a state of continuous compliance across the enterprise. And since the inventory and analysis of its servers is automated, they know they won’t miss a server when it comes time to deploy and update. In addition to greater accuracy and reliability, Configuresoft ECM and SUM improve productivity and lower costs.

About Configuresoft

Configuresoft is an innovator in systems management technology, ensuring continuous compliance with internal policies and external regulations across today’s heterogeneous computing infrastructures. Spanning both security and operations, the Company’s configuration management, compliance and remediation products are used by 11 of the world’s 25 largest companies to keep their critical systems properly configured, while ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements such as Sarbanes-Oxley, FISMA, GLBA, Basel II, HIPAA and DISA, and industry standards such as ISO 17799, PCI DSS and Microsoft Security Hardening Guides. **To contact Configuresoft, please call (888) U-CONFIG or visit www.configuresoft.com.**

