



> Customer Case Study

## NCCI Holdings, Inc.



### Insurer Boosts Network Reliability and Security, Cuts Cost of Manual Updates

NCCI Holdings, Inc., based in Boca Raton, Florida, is the oldest and largest provider of workers compensation insurance and employee injury data and statistics in the nation. Operating as not-for-profit, NCCI provides analysis of industry trends, prepares workers compensation insurance rates and loss cost recommendations, determines the cost of proposed legislation, and provides a variety of data products to over 900 insurance companies and nearly 40 state governments.

FEATURED PRODUCTS



Enterprise Configuration Manager



Security Update Manager

#### Business Situation

##### Lots of Data, No Insurance

Data is the foundation of nearly all NCCI activities. NCCI goes to great lengths, in collaboration with state regulators under whose authority some of the data is collected, to maintain the quality and integrity of data.

Managing the nation's largest database of workers compensation insurance information is no easy task. Security, compliance and control of the enterprise are top concerns when it comes to protecting the integrity and confidentiality of the data. **"Because of the unique nature of what we do, we're a very technologically driven company, especially when it comes to Web-based applications to drive our business,"** says Lilliana Quintero, Senior Systems Architect at NCCI. **"And because of the sensitive nature of our data—which includes individual records on workers compensation—we have to make that data secure and our system reliable."**

The company has more than 150 servers spread across development, quality assurance and production environments. The specialized nature of NCCI's mission means it must develop most of its applications in-house, including more than 30 Web-based programs. Almost half of the production servers are Web servers to support information and transaction access by NCCI's customers and external audiences. In one month, the company can see more than 14 million hits from 59,000 unique visitors.

**"Our internally developed Windows-based applications are critical to NCCI as we are responsible for offering insight into critical issues facing the workers compensation industry,"** says Quintero.

With NCCI and its customers dependent upon the company's infrastructure, that infrastructure must be reliable. Maintaining high availability is a challenge for NCCI, as it is for most companies. Another key issue is maintaining consistent and up-to-date configurations across servers. Inconsistent configurations, particularly of security updates, can leave some machines vulnerable to attack. Inconsistent configurations can also lead custom software that works on one server to fail on another, causing IT professionals countless hours tracking down the problem. Deploying security updates first requires NCCI to know which servers require each update.

NCCI was using a manual process of deploying security updates and patches that was susceptible to human error. The process was also time-consuming, requiring up to 90 days of staff time per year. NCCI needed a more accurate, reliable and efficient way to ensure the security and availability of its 150-server technology infrastructure, including optimal deployment of security updates to its servers.



**NCCI Finds the Right Policy**

NCCI selected Configuresoft's Enterprise Configuration Manager (ECM) for a comprehensive configuration management database (CMDB) and intelligent server-based agents, which pass change data from monitored servers to the database. An extension of the configuration and change management capability of ECM is Security Update Manager (SUM), used for patch management.

ECM centralizes and automatically monitors, manages and audits the hardware and software configurations of Windows-based systems deployed in large enterprise networks. ECM standardizes server and client configurations through Compliance Toolkits, which automatically enforce policy compliance to prevent security vulnerabilities, minimize downtime and enhance system performance. Security Update Manager (SUM), an add-on module for ECM, alerts administrators to new security bulletins issued by Microsoft, instantly assessing entire networks to detect vulnerabilities and deploying required patches to all the target machines with a single mouse click.

To deploy ECM within the NCCI environment, Lilliana Quintero, senior systems architect, and her team, used the Active Directory® service in Windows Server 2000 to identify all the servers in the domain environment. ECM then deployed its agents to those servers. The agents perform an initial data collection of more than 60,000 data elements per server, and store the information on the central SQL Server database. Subsequent scheduled or polled ECM collections update the configuration information in ECM's CMDB, ensuring up-to-date and accurate information. ECM uses built-in or custom compliance templates to compare the collected 'real world' data to the 'desired state' defined by a given template or set of templates. Patch and software update information is a critical part of this collection. Based on systems being back level for software updates, Lilliana and her team then use SUM to recognize systems that require updates, understand dependencies of these software updates and deploy the necessary updates. ECM is then used to audit the update and ensure that the correct systems have received and registered the necessary update.

A critical aspect of distributing software patches is testing. Configuresoft utilizes a strict patch testing regimen to ensure the patch will be delivered properly. As security updates become available, ECM queries the CMDB to identify servers requiring it. An NCCI IT staffer confirms the distribution, and SUM pushes the update to the relevant servers. The Web-based console provides a view to confirm that all updates have been deployed correctly.

Because the inventory and analysis of its servers is automated, NCCI knows it won't miss a server when it comes time to deploy an update. In addition to greater accuracy and reliability, ECM and SUM improve productivity and lower costs.

**A Sound Policy for a Good Night's Sleep**

Configuresoft's ECM and SUM products provided immediate value to the NCCI organization. The ability to understand and view the configurations of each machine in the network provided instant gratification. The extensive patching component saves \$20,000 in assessment time alone. Actual patching and verification numbers far exceed this cost. The greatest benefit to deploying ECM and SUM is the insurance NCCI has that its network is secure.

**"The biggest benefit of the solution is its reliability,"** says Quintero. **"Because the inventory and analysis of our servers is automated, we know we're not going to miss a server when it comes time to deploy and update. We've eliminated the possibility of human error. This is an accurate solution, and that means I can sleep better at night."** Quintero says she expects that ECM will enable NCCI to avoid the type of situation that occurred when the slammer virus hit. Without ECM deployed on the network, Quintero and her colleagues had to spend six hours manually deploying the workaround.

Quintero isn't the only one who sleeps better now. She reports that NCCI management also has a higher level of confidence in its server infrastructure thanks to the ECM solution.

In addition to greater accuracy and reliability, Quintero says the ECM solution delivers increased productivity and lower costs. Deployments of security updates that used to take up to 90 days of personnel time annually are now completed in minutes. That enables NCCI to redeploy its IT staff for challenges of greater strategic value to the company. Because updates are applied consistently throughout the network, NCCI now has eliminated problems from custom applications that work inconsistently on non-identical servers. That both boosts reliability and minimizes the time that staff must devote to such problems.

**"Given the mission-critical nature of our technology, we needed the most reliable solution we could find,"** says Quintero. **"The fact that it also makes it easier and more efficient for us to deploy updates is a great bonus."**

To learn more about NCCI, visit the web at [www.ncci.com](http://www.ncci.com)

**About Configuresoft**

Configuresoft is an innovator in systems management technology, serving eight of the world's 25 largest companies. Based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the Company offers enterprise configuration, policy compliance and remediation products that span both operations and IT security. At a time in which organizations must maintain a continuous state of compliance throughout their infrastructure, Configuresoft ensures these environments conform to any desired or mandated state. **To contact Configuresoft, call 719.447.4600, visit us on the Web at [www.configuresoft.com](http://www.configuresoft.com) or write to [info@configuresoft.com](mailto:info@configuresoft.com).**

