



PZ Cussons

HP Includes Shavlik in Headache Remedy for PZ Cussons.

CUSTOMER OVERVIEW:

PZ Cussons (LSE: PZC) is a major manufacturer of personal healthcare products, and consumer goods. The company is listed on the London Stock Exchange and a constituent of the FTSE 250 Index.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

Recognising that information technology management is not a core competency, PZ Cussons has partnered with HP Customer Delivery Services since 2008 in a long-term project to introduce a standard platform for their desktop systems and supporting servers. This partnership allows the company's 12 business units to share resources. The strength of the partnership is highly reliant on the confidence PZ Cussons has developed in their new systems, which have to be highly available supporting a 24/7 operation.

SOLUTION:

Through its business relationship with HP, PZ Cussons utilises Shavlik NetChk Protect to simplify and automate the patch management process.

BENEFITS:

- Fast and easy to implement and manage
- Centralised management frees up IT staff
- Control and flexibility to manage a dynamic environment
- Provides support for non-Microsoft patches
- Scheduled scanning options with the ability to support short maintenance windows

FTSE 250 listed consumer products group, PZ Cussons, is a UK-based multi-national with operations in Asia, Africa and Europe. Operating for 125 years, the company is responsible for many household name brands including the PZ Imperial Leather, Original Source and Sanctuary brands for toiletries and cosmetics, Cussons Kids toiletries, Carex anti-bacterial moisturisers, Charles Worthington hair care and much more. Starting as a trading post in Sierra Leone, PZ Cussons built on its expertise in local markets and used strategic acquisitions to grow to more than 9,000 employees and operate in a large number of countries, many of them in the developing world.

Like the company, its IT systems had also developed according to local initiative which eventually became a significant management headache. PZ's IT team concluded it was doing too much fire fighting and problem solving in its efforts to maintain the numerous software programs and systems that had been developed by its 12 business units. Further, the disparate systems, and non-standard processes became an obstacle to business development. It was not unusual, for example, for a team in one country to be unaware of resources or brands with potential for their markets developing in another part of the company. Operations needed to become simpler, better connected and to continue supporting global opportunity. They also needed to be more reliable, as PZ focussed on efficient supply chain management to serve its markets profitably, requiring a highly available 24/7 operation.

Recognising that information technology management is not a core competency, the company has partnered with HP Customer Delivery Services (CDS) since 2008 in a long-term project to introduce a standard platform for their desktop systems and supporting servers. This partnership allows the company's business units to share resources for the first time. For the partnership to work, PZ Cussons clearly has to develop confidence in their new systems, but the company does not want to dedicate its limited internal IT resources to proactively monitoring the services it is receiving. According to Ged Bithell, Head of Group IT Technical Services,



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PZ Cussons, ensuring systems are secure and up to date with the latest patches, is one of those time-consuming, critical tasks that the team at PZ Cussons should not have to think about.

"I've always said that IT should be a very good referee for the business. You don't have to know it is there but it is an essential element of the game and that is what our business wants, support without having too much to think about," says Bithell.

Within its contract, HP is committed to stay on top of security alerts, prioritise patches and updates, within tight maintenance windows, and provide notification that the job is done—and be able to respond to a query should an issue occur. To achieve this, HP chose to include Shavlik NetChk Protect in the standard platform that it is managing for PZ Cussons.

Free wasn't Free

Before working with Shavlik NetChk Protect, the HP CDS team, which is focussed on small and medium sized enterprises, managed patching of clients using the free Windows Server Update Services (WSUS) tools supplied by Microsoft. This imposed a significant effort at the outset to code in client requirements, a physical server at each location, and the manual effort to reconfigure and launch scans every time an update was scheduled.

"Shavlik has taken all of that away," says Dave Fidler, Technical Operations Service Support, HP Customer Delivery Services. "For PZ Cussons this approach would not have been cost effective; Shavlik has more functionality, is easier to configure; and we are able to cover all locations from a single dashboard."

The Shavlik solution is also easy to use with anyone in the team of five working on the PZ Cussons services able to pick up the task.

Confidence comes with Visibility

PZ Cussons' resources and the systems that house them have to be online and highly available, with the maintenance

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window for some as short as five minutes. Scheduling the testing and distribution of patches, often including a reboot of systems once updates had been deployed, represented a complex task with unique requirements for each of the 20 locations for which HP is managing IT systems. The servers, a combination of virtual and physical machines, house the companies' critical business applications, databases, SharePoint, and email systems. NetChk Protect provided the functionality that allowed the team at HP to schedule and automate a workable patching regime, without the need for the time-consuming configuration that would have been required of the vendor supplied free tools. Despite cutting back effort, Shavlik's Any Patch, Anywhere Technology allowed the team to manage the non-Microsoft programs, including Adobe Reader and the Java programs that are present on some of the servers while the Custom Patch Editor enables them to patch virtually any application – including internally-developed applications – anywhere. Virtual machines, whether offline or online, are classed and treated the same as individual physical machines.



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With Shavlik NetChk Protect, Fidler has been able to define and set priorities for groups of machines according to their physical locations first and then again according to the time zones in which they are located. This allows patches to be tested and rolled out automatically at the agreed time for each country according to their priority as determined by the site-specific requirements. Critical alerts requiring immediate attention can be accommodated as exceptions in consultation with the client.

The HP team must also account for the fact that the migration to the standard platform is happening over several years. New servers are added, sometimes on a weekly basis, as the migration progresses, with many servers actively being worked on by the client’s development team. Given this, management for up to 40% of the servers at any given time can be shared between Fidler’s team at HP and PZ Cussons’ production teams.

“We do not always know what is operating on these machines, but with Shavlik we have a record of what has occurred should there be an issue,” explains Fidler.

This knowledge was called upon when a shared server went down as the result of an applied upgrade. After consulting with their client’s production team to reveal what was being developed on the server, the HP team was able to quickly identify which patch caused the problem and remediate the situation.

Realising the Value

With HP, PZ Cussons have the proven, reliable and efficient IT systems that they were looking for. And processes are simpler which has allowed people to interact more and discover opportunities previously hidden behind department and geographic boundaries.

For HP Customer Delivery Services, having Shavlik NetChk

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Protect in the service toolbox supports the efficiency and control that the company has committed to deliver. Offering managed infrastructure services to medium business customers, they are now using the solution for five other clients and have licensed NetChk Protect to include it as part of their standard maintenance service.