



Dawson News

Wholesaler Implements PatchLink Update™ to Secure Enterprise Network Infrastructure

Dawson News, a division of Dawson Holdings PLC, is one of the three key players of newspaper and magazine wholesaling in the United Kingdom, with a 20 percent share of the news distribution sector. The company delivers over 1 billion copy sales each year. Dawson News employs 2,450 professionals who work out of 16 full branches, nine sub-depots and a main office based in the London Borough of Croydon. Moreover, these inter-connected branches run a fleet of 900 vehicles, which make 5 million deliveries in a typical year, covering 18 million miles — a distributed enterprise scenario worthy of equivalent IT security.

The Information Technology (IT) Department at Dawson News comprises approximately 50 employees including developers and specialist engineers spread across VMS alphas, network and workstation infrastructure. Raj Mehta, senior systems administrator for Dawson News, works in the PC Support Group and is responsible for the company's Intel infrastructure, which consists of approximately 600 machines. According to Mehta, "Because the entire company relies on assistance from Dawson News IT employees, our team is always seeking automated IT tools to assist them in doing more with less."

Dawson News Mobilizes Patch Management Efforts

After experiencing firsthand the damage that worms and viruses can do by exploiting holes in un-patched systems, it became imperative for Dawson News' IT Department to stay on top of critical patches. In early 2004, Microsoft began its monthly patch update program on the first Tuesday of each month. However, manually patching these Microsoft systems quickly became a time-sapping task for the Dawson News IT team. And, due to other IT priorities, there was also a very real danger that some computers in the company's network could be missed.

“ The quality, reliability, and scalability of the product combined with the affordability factor convinced me to purchase PatchLink Update™ ”

Raj Mehta - Sr. Systems Administrator

Mehta notes, "Every time we needed to deploy a patch, we had to dedicate IT staff to the problem. Moreover, this was made more difficult because many of the machines were located in multiple locations and were mission critical to our business. Our opportunity for installing a given patch was very small, making the situation worse since we're a 24x7x365 business."

TCL Group & PatchLink Update: A Powerful Security Patch Management Solution

To address its patch management challenges, Dawson News began testing automated patch management solutions earlier this year. Mehta investigated products from various vendors. Following a month-long evaluation based on a stringent set of criteria



KEY FACTS:

- Billion dollar company
- 2500 employees spanning 26 locations
- 24x7x365 business critical enterprise level network powered by nearly 600 machines
- Multi-platform environment including Microsoft, UNIX, Linux, Mac & NetWare
- IT staff of 50 struggled to keep up with patch releases



conducted by Mehta's IT team, PatchLink Corporation and its UK distributor, TCL Group, were selected to provide Dawson News with PatchLink Update, a market-leading patch management solution.

Among Dawson News' requirements for PatchLink Update were:

- An agent architecture to continually monitor patch compliance and to handle computers on slow bandwidth connections as well as laptop users.
- Accurate identification of systems requiring patches and the ability to supersede existing patches correctly. PATCHLINK UPDATE's patent-pending signature and Patch Fingerprinting™ technology more than met this requirement for Dawson News.
- An easy-to-use browser-based interface and supported training.
- Highly scalable enterprise functionality to support distributed architecture scenarios using standard protocols (e.g., HTTP).
- Multi-platform support to ensure that all leading operating systems and applications can be patched as necessary (e.g., UNIX, Linux, Mac, NetWare, etc.).

"The quality, reliability, and scalability of the product combined with the affordability factor convinced me and the board at Dawson News to purchase PatchLink Update," states Mehta.

Solid Patch Rollout Equals Superior Results & Benefits

Dawson News purchased Version 5 of PatchLink Update in 2004 and subsequently rolled out the solution in a phased manner across the company's enterprise using the product's Agent Deployment Wizard.

Now, when Microsoft issues its new monthly batch of patches, the Dawson News IT staff is alerted via email if the patch is critical. The staff can then review a report that shows how many machines are in need of the specific critical patches.

Typically, Dawson deploys patches to a test group first and then monitors the results before deploying the critical patches in a production environment. PatchLink Update then continually monitors the deployments through to successful completion, tracking items such as problem machines, software conflicts, and reboot status.

The benefits Dawson News has experienced are two-fold: savings in labor by eradicating manual patching; and, from a security point of view, knowing that all of the company's computers are securely patched and not vulnerable to malicious hacker attacks. Mehta adds, "PatchLink Update is very easy to install, configure, and use. The Graphical User Interface (GUI) is straightforward. With this security patch management solution, all I need to do is click to install packages, allowing me to move onto the next important IT task."