



Freeman School of Business, Tulane University

PROFILE

An information technology team of five keeps 485 workstations and 27 servers running smoothly at the internationally recognized business school. When manual patching had the team constantly applying updates—instead of supporting teaching and learning—IT leadership sought an automated patch management solution that would get the job done but minimize disruptions to end users.

INDUSTRY

Education

NETWORK

27 Windows servers
485 Windows workstations

SOLUTION

Ivanti® Protect Standard

KEY BENEFITS

- In the case of major security updates, the IT team is freed from spending half a day on manual patching.
- The team pushes out updates remotely on a schedule that works for all end users.
- Ivanti updates third-party software, rather than just Microsoft products.
- Centralized reporting ensures that IT always knows what has been applied or not.

Tulane's Business School Keeps Computers Secure, without Disrupting Faculty, Staff and Students

Overview

The A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana is a leading, internationally recognized business school with more than 2,500 students in programs spanning the globe. An information technology team of five keeps the business school's 485 workstations and other systems running smoothly, including faculty and staff desktops, classroom computers, and several labs.

Challenge: Critical Updates Demand "Guerrilla Action"

After a critical Microsoft security update was announced back in 2004, IT team members Jean Mouton and Tom Gerace stood in the doorway of a campus computer lab, and sighed. There was no getting around patching hundreds of machines by hand.

"Both of us were just thinking, 'We have to find a better way,'" said Mouton, Systems Administrator at the Freeman School of Business. "Back then, it was all hands on deck to tackle a security update. It could take five of us a morning to patch a whole lab as machines came free. We called it guerrilla action."

When major security updates such as this arose, the entire team dropped whatever they were doing to deploy patches to hundreds of machines across the business school. Compounding the challenge, they had to fit in updates whenever it was convenient for faculty, staff, and students, either before the workday started or whenever machines were unoccupied.

Regular updates—performed by hand—were a constant challenge for the business school. Some computers, such as those in labs, were entirely under IT control. But faculty and researcher computers were not, requiring constant education and reminders to apply updates and restart computers. Even with a carefully targeted education campaign, end users didn't follow through at times. If an update was disruptive, the end user would disable it.

"We were really hamstrung without an enterprise patch management solution. We needed an automatic update strategy to keep our servers and our network secure." said Tom Gerace, Assistant Vice President for Enterprise Services. At the time, Gerace was Director of Technology and Library at the business school.

Solution: Many Applications in "One Fell Swoop"

The IT team launched an extensive evaluation of patch management options. They wanted a solution that would automate patching; however, they needed complete flexibility in scheduling when patches would roll out to avoid disrupting end users. Automatic updates, if not configured properly, can launch during a class period and disrupt a presentation.

- Agentless patch management means the team doesn't need to install anything on computers, streamlining rollout of automatic updates and machine upgrades.
- The team can group machines and schedule updates when they are most convenient for end users.



- Ivanti covers all security updates regardless of criticality rating.
- Reporting shows exactly which updates have been applied and those that have not.

Since the business school's decision to choose Ivanti Protect, Ivanti has added the ability to update third-party software, rather than just Microsoft products. "I love that we can do so many applications in one fell swoop," Mouton said.

Supporting Green Initiatives

Ivanti dramatically changed application updates for the Freeman School. Instead of physically going to all 485 computers every time, now IT staff members push out updates from a central location.

To accommodate the many needs of end users, the team chose not to automate all patching. Instead, they group machines and schedule patches to roll out to each group on a specific schedule. That means, for example, that lab updates run at five minutes after midnight, when the lab closed.

For computers that are not directly in their control, the IT team has worked closely with faculty and staff members to find the right balance. For that matter, many end users—who were applying their own updates previously—were pleased to turn it over to IT and be relieved of the burden.

As the university strives for greater energy efficiency across campus, the IT team had to take into consideration that end users want to power down computers at night. The IT team worked closely with them to find optimal times for updates during the day.

"We are able to tell faculty and staff, if they want that green feel, go ahead and shut down at night," Mouton said. "Then at the noon hour, we'll push the patches out. They don't even know we're pushing out patches."

With centralized patching, the team also has a complete record of every patch that has run, or hasn't run—no longer requiring visits to each computer.

Back to Supporting Teaching, Learning

An enterprise patch management solution completely changed the work-week for the Freeman School's IT team, which was constantly traversing the school to apply patches across dozens of offices and labs. Patching took support staff away from doing other work to support the school.

Instead of the entire team taking a full morning to update a lab, those critical updates happen from a central location with the push of a button. In the case of major security updates, the entire team is freed from spending half a day on manual updates.

"Patching, though necessary, doesn't contribute to the mission of the school," Gerace said. "Now we're spending time on real work, teaching and learning, rather than doing busywork."

Beyond major time-savings for the IT team, the flexibility of Ivanti Protect has enabled the Freeman School to stay protected without disrupting faculty, staff, and students — for more than a decade.

"Success is measured not only in the achievement of a patch rate of almost 100%, but also in how the process keeps workstations, servers, and the network secure with minimal intrusion to the users' daily work regimen," Mouton said. "It comes down to meeting the needs of the user."

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