

ABC finds solution to unique system needs

Kinetica addresses broadcasters requirements with an integrated monitoring and management system

Enterprise Management Systems may be transparent to most computer users but to the Australian Broadcast Corporation (ABC) their influence can be seen and heard across the organisation.

The ABC's Enterprise Management System (EMS), designed and installed by Sydney-based integrator Kinetica, not only manages the computer network, and traditional IT systems and devices, it also manages the PCs used to automatically broadcast 100s of hours of digitised audio programs from studios.

As more of the ABC's broadcasting equipment and systems are digitised and moved to PC platforms the integration of its systems and the monitoring of all individual components has become critical. It is vital for the broadcaster to ensure these systems run smoothly. The EMS notifies technical personnel of any problems with those programs and circumvents any malfunctions to prevent any interruptions to those services.

The ABC has recently completed stage one of the rollout of its EMS. When the organisation originally went looking for an EMS solution it had several key criteria to be met.

The system had to manage and maintain more than 4000 PCs located around the country; it had to provide instantaneous alerts of problems throughout this network and identify potential security vulnerabilities; and it had to automate some of the mundane tasks that were absorbing too much valuable staff time.

The main concern for the ABC was the management of its PCs. It had previously tried other desktop management systems that weren't successful and what was needed was a system with greater flexibility.

After conducting pilot trials of two systems, the ABC selected Kinetica's proposed solution due to its flexibility and cost effectiveness, and the anticipated long-term benefits.

The ABC's EMS helps the organisation to manage and monitor around 4,000 desktop PCs, 200 servers and a full network infrastructure. It gives management an overview of how the network is performing, usage trends etc. And because all the information is contained in systems integrated beneath a common interface different groups can extract different information pertinent to their position.

For example, the EMS has a web-based tool that provides an easy-to-read picture of the availability and health of the network overall for senior IT managers.

Then, the help desk has access to an interface that gives them a map of Australia that shows where a problem is occurring so they can anticipate and prepare for incoming calls. This is important, as most of the ABC's IT support is physically located in Sydney only.

And the diagnostic and specific performance monitoring tools forewarn the data network staff of any potential crashes or other problems.

The EMS also provides the ABC with major benefits in reducing the amount of time and resources needed to manage its network of PCs located in offices in all capital cities and 48 regional sites across Australia. Previously when the organisation needed to upgrade the software on the PCs it had to send personnel to each site or attempt the upgrade through log-in scripts. Now the upgrades can happen without the knowledge of the individual users.

Using the EMS, the ABC is able to remotely discern what software is being used on what computer. IT staff can conduct software installations or distribute upgrades by remote access from a central point, allowing all the PCs, including those in remote regional locations, to be standardised and maintained from a distance.

The EMS also allows the ABC to conduct hardware and software inventory. The kind of software installed on particular PCs is immediately accessible via the database, and PCs are also easily located when leases are coming up for renewal.

In essence, the ABCs EMS provides it with the tools to maintain its mission critical devices. In terms of what the EMS does for day-to-day business, it allows IT personnel to monitor and maintain the IT infrastructure in a timely and cost-effective way, making better use of the ABCs limited resources.

Having the right integrator has fulfilled two main roles for the ABC. Firstly, an independent integrator provided a broader knowledge of available products and so could better meet the organisations specific needs. Secondly, Kinetica integrated all these disparate products, giving the ABCs end users just one common interface through which they work.

The ABC expects to see a return on its investment (ROI) in the EMS within 18 months. What the broadcaster was looking for was not so much a dollar value return as the ability to release staff from mundane, time-consuming tasks that have since been automated by the EMS.

The first stage, which is just being finalised, is the implementation of the EMS to achieve the management and monitoring of its IT infrastructure, give alarm and event notifications etc. Phase two will allow the ABC to monitor the health of specific applications and to integrate more of its broadcast equipment; and phase three will give greater security such as real time notification of someone trying to break into the network, and will support agreements defining service levels to the various divisions within the ABC.

About Kinetica:

Kinetica, formerly known as Full Spectrum, is the market leader in designing, implementing and maintaining Enterprise Management Systems which empower businesses to reap the benefits of their IT infrastructure.

The company delivers management systems that are focused on supporting business processes and delivering complete control and visibility of the diverse and disparate elements of clients' IT infrastructures. Kinetica delivers the full spectrum of EMS solutions from industry leading vendors to tailor a professional, complete and reliable solution, using products that expertly match business needs. Visit the Kinetica web site at: www.kinetica.com.au for more details.