

Case Study

Medavie Blue Cross

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Medavie Blue Cross

Quick Facts

Company: Medavie Blue Cross

Industry: Health insurance provider

Annual claims processed: 29.2 million

Active desktops: 1,800

Servers: 250

Nationwide offices: 11

IT challenges solved:

- Ensuring license compliance
- Eliminating unnecessary software purchases
- Enforcing security standards

Lynn Barbour hadn't planned on becoming the Configuration and Asset Manager for Medavie Blue Cross in Moncton, New Brunswick— she was just doing a little spring cleaning.

By the time she'd dug herself out of the storage closet piled to the ceiling with purchasing documentation and software media dating back to the 1990's, she walked out with the new title and a colossal task ahead of her. At first, the issue seemed to be primarily one of tracking the whereabouts of software licenses they owned, and making sure everything installed was legally licensed. But as Barbour continued following the bread crumbs, she discovered Medavie's licensing issues were much more serious than she initially suspected, requiring a complete overhaul of their approach to acquiring and managing their software assets.

Medavie Blue Cross, a 60-year-old Canadian health insurance provider, has multiple offices across Eastern Canada comprised of over 1,800 active desktops, 250 servers and close to 200 IT staff. In addition to serving its own client base of individuals and businesses, Medavie contracts its IT services to government organizations, which use Medavie's system to manage insurance for their members. With a computing environment diverse enough to support its broad operational mission and wide geographic presence, Barbour had her work cut out for her. While a standard desktop image existed, it was not enforced. Requests for new software were blindly approved, with no system in place to vet those applications for compatibility with their security policies and network environment or validate what was actually installed on workstations. Manual software compliance audits were conducted occasionally, but were extremely time consuming and weren't performed frequently enough to keep pace with the ever-changing desktops.

As Barbour continued to "clean house", she made one additional discovery that would prove essential as she undertook the task of addressing these challenges: a dusty box of Express Software Manager, a PC inventory and software metering product that had been purchased years prior but forgotten due to a series of staff changes. Barbour quickly got the latest version of the product up and running and used it to collect data on the inventory and usage of Medavie's software assets. What Barbour discovered would have made even the most stalwart asset manager panic—loads of unlicensed software, unused licenses with hefty ongoing maintenance fees, and the presence of programs that violated corporate security policies.

Given the magnitude of the risks, Barbour set about righting the ship by establishing a thoughtful and comprehensive software asset management program. Here's how Express Software Manager gave her the information and tools she needed to get Medavie back on the straight and narrow.

Ensuring Software Compliance with Inventory Tracking & License Reconciliation

Medavie Blue Cross' license compliance status prior to Express Software Manager was uncertain, at best. To better understand their license position, Barbour first performed a comprehensive and detailed inventory of all the software installed across the organization, both on-site and at its remote offices. Express Software Manager easily accomplished this task through its automatic discovery and configuration of thousands of files into recognized software titles, or "license units". More importantly, the product analyzed and presented inventory data from a licensing perspective so decisive action could be taken. After collecting, consolidating and importing all of Medavie's purchasing information, Barbour was able to run one quick report, entitled "Am I Compliant," which compared actual installations with licenses purchased to reveal exactly how many licenses were needed to ensure they were legal. The information she received was priceless, according to Barbour; by her estimation the organization avoided over \$400,000 in potential copyright infringement penalties for unlicensed software—no small sum for any size organization.

After purchasing the required licenses, Barbour went about establishing centralized purchasing processes so that any new software request required approval and subsequent installations were tracked via Express Software Manager. Now she runs month-end compliance reports that alert her when unlicensed software shows up on the network. Barbour is so confident with the new system that she actually invites software manufacturers to look at her compliance reports—demonstrating a level of assurance most asset managers only dream of.

Reducing Software Costs by Purging Unused Licenses

Becoming compliant was essential to reducing Medavie's risk in the event of a vendor audit, but transforming the organization's asset management efforts into a program that actually saved money was the result of tracking software usage with Express Software Manager. As Barbour transitioned into her new job, she was shocked to learn that when people left the company or old machines were retired, maintenance contracts for licenses on the now-idle desktops often continued for years on end. Barbour also suspected that because each desktop shared a standard image, employees routinely had software on their desktops that wasn't truly necessary to perform their jobs. But until she began systematically tracking application utilization, Barbour had no idea just how many licenses were going unused and, correspondingly, how much money was being left on the table.

Money in the Bank

By tracking application usage with Express Software Manager, Medavie Blue Cross saves approximately \$100,000 annually through renegotiated contracts and terminating maintenance on unused licenses.

Case Study

Medavie Blue Cross

When Express Software Manager revealed the true extent of the problem, Barbour immediately terminated maintenance contracts on the unused licenses and estimates that Medavie saves over \$100,000 annually as a result. “Tracking software usage has paid for the product tenfold!” says Barbour enthusiastically. Now, Barbour performs a usage audit every three months. When she finds applications that haven’t been used for six months or more, they are sent into a license pool to be reallocated to other users, thereby avoiding the purchase of new licenses. Moreover, because software installations and usage data are linked to purchasing information stored within Express Software Manager, Barbour now has a centralized method for tracking and managing Medavie’s software budget. Immediately after establishing this new system, Barbour renegotiated a maintenance contract with IBM, resulting in a savings of over \$40,000.

Enforcing Security Standards via Application Control

Perhaps the most important benefit Medavie has achieved through its use of Express Software Manager is its significantly improved security posture. As a provider of medical insurance, Medavie Blue Cross is held to uncompromising security standards and faces frequent government audits to ensure that confidential medical data remains protected. Express Software Manager plays a critical role in Medavie’s security strategy in tandem with the rigorous software policies Barbour has since established.

Desktop Security

“There is no other application I’ve seen that gives me the security audit capabilities and information that Express Software Manager offers.”

Lynn Barbour
Configuration & Asset Mgr.

Prior to Barbour’s efforts, no corporate standard existed for what software was purchased or installed on machines. While Medavie had a standard desktop image, computers were not locked down because their staff of 175 developers required flexibility with the tools they used. This open-desktop policy, however, inevitably led to the presence and use of software that posed a risk to the sensitive data housed on the network. Barbour cites the example of English-French translation software which required that the application under development be uploaded to a web site where the translation took place. This “tunnel”, however, created a potential breach through which health information could

get inadvertently transmitted, a risk that violated their strict corporate and regulatory security policies.

To combat such potential threats, Barbour developed and now maintains an “application matrix” comprised of software titles that have been tested, validated, approved, and documented; employees are prohibited from using software that is not part of the matrix. Every day, Barbour turns to Express Software Manager to identify new applications introduced to the network.

Case Study

Medavie Blue Cross

If she discovers something that's not on the matrix, Barbour uses the “application control” functionality in Express Software Manager to remotely shut down it down until it's been thoroughly investigated and, if appropriate, added to the application matrix. “There is no other application I've seen that gives me the security audit capabilities and information that Express Software Manager offers,” says Barbour.

Results that Speak for Themselves

With carefully crafted processes and the right technology, Lynn Barbour transformed Medavie Blue Cross from a mess to a model program – winning the Software Asset Management Practitioner of the Year Award from the International Business Software Managers' Association (IBSMA), a leading industry group. With new policies surrounding the acquisition, approval, and deployment of software, along with robust reporting capabilities that alert Barbour to potential security or legal risks, Medavie is light years ahead of most organizations. Perhaps even more noteworthy, Barbour was able to offset the costs of the needed technology, personnel, and process investments by uncovering hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of savings associated with unused licenses.

Now, three years after first cleaning out that storage closet, Barbour is fondly—if not somewhat irreverently—referred to as the “Software Police” by Medavie staff, a title she relishes. And it could be argued that Express Software Manager, a once-obscure piece of software destined for Medavie's dumpster, will be riding “shotgun” for a long time to come.

Case Study

Medavie Blue Cross

About Express Metrix

Express Metrix, a veteran in the IT asset management space for over a decade, focuses on serving organizations whose needs for accurate, comprehensive IT asset reporting and trouble-free management aren't met by enterprise-oriented framework products or less sophisticated inventory tools. Express Metrix recently welcomed its 5,000th customer, having earned a reputation for delivering superior IT asset reporting, ease of deployment and use, and outstanding customer support. Winner of the SIIA's CODiE Award for "Best Asset Management Solution," Express Metrix is a Microsoft Certified partner and is certified Citrix Ready. More information on Express Metrix can be found at www.ExpressMetrix.com.

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