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CUSTOMER SUCCESS

Amway (China) Co. Ltd.

Reclaiming 1,000 Productivity Hours a Year with Symantec Solutions

Amway (China) Co. Ltd. needed to improve patch compliance for its heterogeneous server environment and allow a team of five people to efficiently manage more than 400 servers. The company turned to endpoint management and IT service management solutions from Symantec. Results include 1,000 hours a year of reclaimed productivity previously lost to application downtime, a 30 percent reduction in server management time, a fourfold improvement in patch compliance, and the ability to easily generate weekly reports on IT assets and software licensing.

Building a direct sales giant

Eva Cheng knows what it takes to do business in China. Now chairwoman of Amway (China) Co. Ltd., she started as a secretary in Amway Corp.'s Hong Kong office in 1977. With patience, determination, and vision, Cheng built a business that now contributes 40 percent of Amway's global sales while deftly navigating significant challenges—including the Chinese government's 1998-2006 ban on direct sales to consumers. Amway China survived and thrived by building a network of brick-and-mortar retail stores, establishing further trust with consumers and enhancing its brand's value.

China is now Amway's largest market worldwide. More than 200,000 sales representatives across the nation generate 18 billion CNY (3 billion USD) in annual revenue in one of the world's fastest growing markets for consumer goods.

Keeping 400 servers up to date

To keep its 6,000 direct employees productive, Amway China must provide maximum availability for critical applications such as email, help desk, and its corporate intranet. More than 400 servers support these applications, and keeping patches up to date is critical. However, the IT team struggled to keep up using a combination of manual patching and automation tools with limited functionality.

"It was too much work for the five engineers we have dedicated to server management," says Cyrus Yang, IT engineer. "As a result, our patch compliance rate was only around 20 percent."

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Website: amway.com.cn

Industry: Manufacturing, Retail

Headquarters: Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

Employees: 6,000+ direct employees; 200,000+ sales representatives

SYMANTEC SOLUTIONS

Endpoint Management

IT Service Management

Why Symantec?

- Provides centralized management and automated patching for 400+ servers
- Works with a variety of server platforms and operating systems
- Mature, stable solutions

To schedule operating system patches for its Microsoft Windows-based servers, the team used Microsoft Windows Server Update Services (WSUS). “It worked, but we had no control over when the patches would be deployed,” says Yang. “It actually caused more work than it saved, because often Windows patches require rebooting the server. This sometimes caused downtime for internal applications, because we didn’t know exactly when servers would be rebooted. We would find out there was a problem with an application, and then we had to remediate the issue. Reporting was poor, so it took a while to locate which server was having problems and figure out which team member was responsible for managing that server. This never affected customer-facing applications, but if it had, the business impact could have been severe.”

Improving patch compliance fourfold

To improve efficiency without hiring additional IT staff, Yang and his team evaluated endpoint management solutions from Symantec, Microsoft, and LANDesk. They decided to deploy Altiris™ Server Management Suite and Altiris™ Asset Management Suite from Symantec. “Compared to the other solutions we evaluated, Symantec was able to support more platforms and offered more mature functionality,” says Yang.

Altiris Server Management Suite provides heterogeneous server management across Windows, Linux, UNIX, and virtual platforms, while Altiris Asset Management Suite improves visibility into IT assets at every point in the lifecycle to reduce costs and fulfill compliance initiatives.

“Our patch compliance rate is now at least 85 percent,” says Yang. “We have much better reporting now—we can know at a glance which patches have been deployed. We still choose to patch some critical servers manually, but we automate patching for most servers, and we have full control over the scheduling.”

SOLUTIONS AT A GLANCE

Key Challenges

- Reduce IT staff time dedicated to server management
- Improve patch compliance to avoid application downtime
- Enhance visibility into IT assets

Symantec Products

- Altiris™ Asset Management Suite 7.1 from Symantec
- Altiris™ Server Management Suite 7.1 from Symantec

Symantec Services

- Symantec Basic Maintenance Services

Technology Environment

- Server platform: IBM servers running IBM AIX; HP BladeSystem running Linux and Windows Server; VMware vSphere
- Applications: Lotus Domino, point of sale systems, help desk, Web portal

BUSINESS RESULTS AND TECHNICAL BENEFITS

- 1,000 productivity hours per year reclaimed
- 30% reduction in IT staff time needed to manage servers
- Fourfold improvement in patch compliance (85% vs. 20%), enhancing security
- Up to threefold faster server deployment
- Able to generate weekly reports on IT assets and licensing

Reclaiming 1,000 productivity hours a year

Because of this, application downtime has decreased dramatically. “I estimate that with Altiris Server Management Suite, we’re saving at least two weeks a month of combined productivity time, between business users and IT,” says Yang. “That’s 1,000 hours a year that we’ve helped the business reclaim, and we’ve reduced server management time by around 30 percent.”

Previously, patching all of the company’s servers would have taken six months, Yang estimates. “With Altiris Server Management Suite, we could patch and test our entire server infrastructure in three weeks, taking into consideration that some are still done manually,” he says.

“With Altiris Server Management Suite, we’re saving at least two weeks a month of combined productivity time. That’s 1,000 hours a year.”

Cyrus Yang

IT Engineer
Amway (China) Co. Ltd.

Security has improved as well. “Our security team used to find a lot of problems with the servers because of lack of patching, but now they hardly ever find issues,” says Yang. “The Symantec solutions have simplified operations for both teams.”

Threefold faster server deployment

Altiris Server Management Suite provides image-based and scripted provisioning capabilities to reduce build times and ensure that each server configuration is reliable and consistent. “Deployment time varies, but in general we are able to deploy servers two to three times faster using Altiris Server Management Suite,” says Yang.

Streamlining audit preparation

Amway China now has much greater visibility into its IT assets and software licenses with Altiris Asset Management Suite. “We need to be able to track servers through their lifecycle and understand how many and what type of software licenses we own,” says Yang. “Before, we used a manual number-based system, but sometimes servers get repurposed for other uses, and we had no way of tracking the hardware when that happened.”

IT produces weekly asset reports, which the business appreciates. “That kind of attention to detail would not have been possible before,” says Yang. “Now our asset group and our security group work together to do an audit every three months, based on the weekly reports that we provide. With Altiris Asset Management Suite, we’re saving a significant amount of IT staff time on audit preparation.”

Effective, efficient server management

For support, Amway China contracts with Symantec Basic Maintenance Services, which will be helpful as the company upgrades to Altiris Server Management Suite 7.1 and Altiris Asset Management Suite 7.1. “Altiris 7.1 offers support for even more platforms, integrated virtual machine management, a faster console, and an improved user interface,” says Yang. “It’s very stable and intuitive—it’s easy to find all the reports I need.”

With Symantec solutions in place, Amway China can be as successful at server management as it has been at winning new customers. “Symantec has brought great value to our company by allowing us to be more effective and more efficient,” says Yang. “The staff time savings and increased visibility into IT assets are major benefits.”

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