



US Travel Service Maximizes IT Efficiency by Automating Software License and Patch Management

Background

Established in 1988 and located in California, Holiday Travel of America strives to provide customers with vacations at the very best value. The business continually develops high-value travel incentives and has become a recognized leader and standard-setter in the incentive travel industry.

The Holiday Travel IT staff supports employees in the home office as well as employees who work remotely. The computer network includes a range of devices including servers, PCs, laptops and network infrastructure components. All PCs run on Windows and utilize Java to run Sabre, an airline, and cruise reservation application for researching and coordinating travel arrangements. Another key application that IT supports is the Adobe suite of products, which the website support team uses to create websites that allow clients to do real-time, online vacation bookings, so compatibility with all major browsers must be assured.

The Challenge

As a one-person IT department, Shane Harris needs to maximize his time and work as efficiently as possible to properly support all the end-users and devices on the Holiday Travel computer network. To keep systems running properly, and to give users the application performance they need to carry out their jobs, Harris needed to centralize and automate multiple IT support-processes to the greatest extent possible.

“To keep our computer network running properly, it’s critical to know what applications are running and to have control over all of them,” Harris said. *“Without proper controls, it’s easy for users to download and install applications. Things can get out of hand easily.”*

One particular area Harris sought to automate was software patch-management. Rather than having to manually track down and apply each patch individually, he wanted a central resource where he could access all the patches and manage distribution to the necessary devices on the network. Finding a tool to automate these functions would improve efficiency while also reducing the risk of patches being applied too late.

“We want to apply patches fast to avoid application performance problems, and we want to make sure we have an accurate record of which machines are patched. Our previous approach took too long, and we sometimes could not update machines as quickly as we wanted.”

IN BRIEF

Company Name

Holiday Travel Of America

Industry Sector

Wholesale Travel/Marketing

The Challenge

- ❖ Accelerate and automate software patch deployments
- ❖ Accurately track software usage and ensure compliance

Why Numara Software

- ❖ Flexibility to add new capabilities as business needs change
- ❖ Responsive support including escalation during unusual events
- ❖ Ability to monitor and deploy multiple IT functions

Business Benefits

- ❖ Reduces IT admin time required to support end-users
- ❖ Automates patch identification, deployment and management
- ❖ Ensures software license compliance
- ❖ Improves end-user support through automated feedback and incident tracking

“Instead of searching through Windows updates and selecting patches individually, we can download from one central place and apply all patches at the same time. This approach avoids disrupting users and saves considerable IT admin time. We can deploy a number of patches and be assured that they will all be successfully applied.”

Another critical need for Holiday Travel involved software license compliance since the business needs to make sure it properly manages licenses and does not violate any software usage requirements. *“Software vendors make us aware of how serious the situation could become if we were ever to become non compliant. We want to make sure that this never happens, and Numara products allow us to do this.”*

For providing general IT support, Harris had relied on a basic tool that did not provide enough functionality to properly manage IT support. *“Work-order creation was not as automated as much as we would have liked, and we could not organize work orders in a consistent format. We needed to centralize and automate the processes so we would have a more complete set of workflows, records and reports to increase efficiency.”*

Numara Software Solution

To automate software license management, patch deployments, and the tracking of support issues, Holiday Travel turned to Numara’s family of products. Harris first inventoried all software licenses and confirmed if all licenses were in compliance. Because of volume licensing, the business needs views into all software license inventory to compare usage vs. licensing to ensure compliance.

“At a glance, we can look at any server or PC and see exactly which software licenses are loaded, whether we look at our databases, Microsoft Office products, or any other applications.”

The Numara Desktop Management solution helps Holiday Travel track each hardware asset including servers, PCs, and peripherals as well as all software associated with each asset. Numara gives Harris one view where he can look at each machine and quickly view the total picture. Harris also relies on the Numara Patch Manager, which helps him patch a wide variety of applications, including system hot fixes and software updates for applications such as Java.

With the overall Numara solution, Harris can now easily track hardware, software licenses, patches and service incidents. *“Numara has reduced our asset management and patch time by 30 percent by making it easier to manage licenses and patch updates. In addition to being more efficient, we also have reduced the risk of our applications under-performing due to patches not being delivered on time.”*

The Results

Instead of searching through online Windows updates for patches, Harris has deployed Numara Patch Manager. *“This capability saves considerable time because we can deploy multiple patches at once knowing they will be successfully delivered to servers and end-user PCs. If there’s an issue, we find out quickly through the automatic alerts Numara provides.”*

“We essentially start the patch process and then just forget about it. We know—with confidence—that the process will complete itself or alert us to any issues. We don’t have to spend time manually monitoring the patches.”

Harris also values the increased interaction with the end users that Numara allows him to have. Harris appreciates having a single, central resource to find patches, software license information and service-incident information rather than having to manually search multiple sources to find the data.

“In addition to allowing me to perform more efficiently, Numara tools also allow me to leave users alone while I work through patch, license and support issues. I can operate in the background to provide the help that users need without interrupting their work.”

Looking Ahead

“We know that Numara will continue to support us and help enhance how well their solutions work. In cases where widespread viruses occur, for example, Numara has shown they are willing to help us create specific ways to deploy the necessary patches. It’s good to know we have a partner dedicated to making sure its solutions work well and is willing to jump in when unusual circumstances occur.”

Harris also looks forward to deploying the next version of Numara Software’s Desktop Management Solution. After previewing the solution during the beta program, Harris said, *“I like the new guided tasks (Instant Expert), and how easy it is to install the software without significant knowledge of patch management. The latest version provides views that make it easy to determine if tasks are completed correctly, and it provides the ability to switch away from the guided tasks as we become more experienced.”*

The Numara Patch Manager solution, which now includes enhancements applied by Numara after feedback from customers (including Harris), offers a flexible and customizable solution that addresses each customer’s needs.

“As a modular application, it allows you to download the licenses you require and displays only the licenses you’ve taken. The product is very intuitive and easy-to-use right out of the box. It will give us a solid platform to grow into and refine according to our business requirements. Throughout the nine years we have used Numara solutions, we have never had any major problems, and the support has always been responsive with helpful suggestions. We always receive fast answers that work well.”

Harris looks forward to implementing even more lifecycle management solutions from Numara. He and Holiday Travel chose Numara, in part, due to Numara’s ability to grow as his business needs expanded and Numara’s commitment and support. *“I know that I can depend on Numara every step of the way.”*

Who are we?

Numara® Software Inc. is a leading provider of integrated IT management solutions for Desktop Management, PC Lifecycle Management, Security & Compliance, Help Desk and Service Desk. Designed to optimize IT management, Numara® FootPrints® and Numara® Track-It!® collectively support more than 50,000 customer sites and nearly 20 million IT assets worldwide.

