

Case Study

Service Improves With Wireless IT Administration and Management



Company: Energen® is a diversified energy company, based in Alabama, with a focus on oil and gas acquisitions that also operates as a natural gas utility company.

Industry: Utilities and Energy

Region: Americas

Company Size: Large Enterprise

Email Environment: Microsoft® Exchange

Type of Solution: Network and Systems Management

BlackBerry Partner Solution: MobileControl Administrator from Conceivium Business Solutions

Business Challenge: A small IT group needs to offer its internal customers virtually uninterrupted access to data and key systems without reducing service, expanding the IT workforce, or working team members around the clock.

Solution: The BlackBerry Enterprise Server® v4.0, enabled with the BlackBerry Mobile Data System™ feature, allows wireless network administration to be extended to BlackBerry® devices. MobileControl Administrator from Conceivium Business Solutions makes mobile systems management and problem-solving a reality.

Results:

- Security and ease of IT integration
- Maximizing IT resources
- Keeping customers happy
- Better work-life balance



The Challenge: Efficiently Meet the IT Needs of Internal Customers

How does a small IT group keep essential systems up and running for more than 1,500 of their users? This busy energy company needed a solution for large teams working in the field who depend on accessing their corporate data.

Energen Corporation's modestly sized IT group began managing more than 200 servers, including Windows®, Linux® and UNIX® systems, using the proven BlackBerry Enterprise Solution®, extended with MobileControl Administrator from Conceivium Business Solutions.

"Our field personnel are out there managing gas lines and doing safety inspections," says Brad Anderson, Windows System Administrator. "Every minute they're locked out of their data is bad for business. We needed a way to ensure our ongoing connectivity to manage these systems and keep our people online at all times."

Anderson's team valued the importance of around-the-clock service for their internal customers' needs, but they also valued their own quality of life. They needed a solution that meant they weren't tied to their computers or having to return to an office to perform simple tasks in the middle of the night.

Why BlackBerry?

For Energen, an experiment with BlackBerry devices led to an evolution of thought across the organization that replaced Treo handhelds and Samsung phones, and also necessitated the demand for more robust IT services. Within 12 months, the company grew from 20 to 450 BlackBerry devices and retired all other wireless devices.

"The number one selling point for BlackBerry was the ability to manage and administer the devices," says Anderson. "We have a very strict password policy that means passwords have to be changed every 90 days. It was a nightmare trying to do this on a small number of phones or Treos because we had to go through a web site managed by our carrier. Before BlackBerry, I couldn't imagine how we were going to handle this process once our deployment grew."

Using the BlackBerry Enterprise Server v4.0, Anderson now has the ability to manage, monitor and administer all of his company's BlackBerry devices over-the-air, from a central location he controls. He can now load device software and user data for multiple users simultaneously. Also from the BlackBerry device, users can securely self provision their own device, reducing the need for significant IT involvement during deployment.

"I especially like the feature with BlackBerry Enterprise Server v4.0 that allows me to wipe a device from a remote location if it is lost and provision a new one, over-the-air," he says. "We have a 50% attrition rate with our devices because sometimes the job requires people to crawl under buildings and in remote locations – I like that I no longer have people sitting in the office waiting for me to provision a new device."

"Extending applications and information with the BlackBerry Mobile Data System is easier and more secure than any competing solutions because it doesn't require us to open ports through our firewall. With BlackBerry, I have peace of mind knowing that none of Energen's strict security policies have been compromised to enable the features our users demand."

~ BRAD ANDERSON, Windows System Administrator

Partner Profile:



Company: *Conceivium Business Solutions*

- More than 12 years' experience in the wireless technology and software development sectors
- Network access and management tools designed for BlackBerry devices to increase the productivity and autonomy of network administrators and decrease infrastructure downtime
- Range of products including MobileControl, MobileTerm for Telnet/SSH, MobileTerm for TN3270 Access, MobileTerm for AS400 Access

Featured Product: MobileControl Administrator

Application Type: Network and Systems Management

- Services:**
- Business analysis
 - Integration and installation
 - Service and support
 - Customization

Business Value:

"Conceivium delivered what they promised. They were very willing to adapt their solution to address features that we wanted. And they were very useful during the integration process, working remotely with us to troubleshoot the process."

~ BRAD ANDERSON, *Windows System Administrator*

Evolving Requirements: The Need for Remote IT Administration

As the number of devices grew at Energen, so did the goals for their functionality. Within a short time, several web-based applications, such as a dispatching system for the field force, were made available on the BlackBerry devices. For Anderson's team, this brought their ability to manage servers, and deliver uninterrupted IT services, into sharp focus.

"Because people can do so much with BlackBerry, in terms of tunneling into our back end systems, we realized that as an IT team we now needed a way to manage all the things they could access while away from the office," says Anderson. "We needed a way to give a very small IT team the ability to handle a heavy workload of customer requests, without having to run back to a desk every time a password needed to be reset."

Energen chose MobileControl Administrator, software for the BlackBerry device by Conceivium Business Solutions. The solution allows them to remotely manage consoles for Microsoft enterprise systems and troubleshoot network and server problems from virtually wherever they are. In one easy step, Anderson's team gained a way to administer systems from the palm of their hands.

"We chose the Conceivium solution over the others we looked at because I felt MobileControl was an investment I could make that would last, no matter what happened with evolving wireless technology," says Anderson. "It is built on open architecture and this means it can scale with us."

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IT Team Helps Increase Efficiency of Internal Customers

With MobileControl Administrator in place, Anderson's team gained the ability to reduce network downtime, provide immediate end user support and maximize their efficiency – all from the convenience of their BlackBerry devices.

The key features they use in MobileControl Administrator include:

- Active Directory Management
- Exchange Server Management
- BlackBerry Server Management
- Cluster Server Management

"This BlackBerry Device Solution allows me to be proactive if a server has a problem," says Anderson. "I can lock and unlock sessions so none of my users are out of action for any length of time. How do you measure the ROI of that? I can tell you the way we now service our internal customers is worth the investment we've made."

Using MobileControl, Energen has an additional 4.7 man years of productivity annually. Four engineers handle outages in their systems that amount to a productivity loss of about 10 hours annually. MobileControl helped them save at least 30 minutes per outage by resolving outage problems within minutes. At 30 minutes savings per outage, the organization has gained back approximately 750 hours of lost productivity per outage time.

Also, because the engineers can access the entire network, or 190 servers, from almost anywhere, each has improved their efficiency by at least 20%. This has resulted in an additional 1,536 hours of productivity (which they can use for other tasks).

Activity	Value	Increased Productivity (hours annually)
Organizational Productivity Improvements from Reduced Network Outages/Downtime		
Reduction in Downtime (average per year)	5 hours	
Employees Affected	1500	
Resulting Improvements in Efficiency (lost hours saved)		7,500 hours
IT Engineer Productivity Improvements		
Improved Efficiency (average % time savings per person)	20%	
Number of Engineers Affected	4	
Number of Hours Worked per year (per Engineer)	1,920	
Resulting Increased Productivity		1,536 hours
Total Lost Hours Savings		9,036 hours/year

Maintaining Quality of Life, Even Under Pressure

"We have so much more freedom now," says Anderson. "I know that even though I may get requests when I'm at home, I can just fix the problem with a couple of clicks from my BlackBerry device."

A web-enabled desktop support function of MobileControl takes the place of roughly 15 software applications, saving Energen time in implementation and maintenance. A key advantage for Anderson is the ability to limit how much access an IT user has. "I can feel confident about what aspects of the infrastructure are being accessed when I'm not there," he says, "because MobileControl allows me to restrict access to the services each team works on."

Anderson also takes advantage of the cluster administrator aspects of the solution that he specifically requested. He can now roll a cluster, while traveling home from work, to balance the loads on his servers. This newfound ability makes the most of his time, allowing him to be more productive, without being tied to a computer.



Results

Security and Ease of IT Administration: The BlackBerry Enterprise Solution offers a secure solution for managing wireless devices without compromising internal firewalls. Energen's IT team can easily administer devices over-the-air versus having to perform these functions in person. "I definitely see that down the road we will be able to reduce the time it takes to deploy BlackBerry devices," says Anderson.

Maximizing IT Resources: With the ability to wirelessly manage any server on the network, the small IT group does not need to add new personnel and run up extra expenses staffing Help Desks around the clock.

Keeping Customers Happy: By giving Energen's IT and Help Desk people access to system administration, problems can be fixed more quickly, resulting in less downtime and better service for internal customers. "With a small number of engineers running more than 200 servers, we know that wherever we are we can keep things running," says Anderson. "It makes the people who manage the oil and gas a lot happier with the people who run IT."

Better Work-Life Balance: IT people no longer have to be on-call or interrupt time with families to go into an office. They can do most of the same administration functions from their devices.

For more information on BlackBerry solutions, visit www.blackberry.com/go/success

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