

PCL Constructors Stays Ahead of Changing Environment with Spotlight on Active Directory

The Challenge

"Our biggest IT challenge is trying to keep up with our rapidly changing environment. We have about 2000 users spread across North America – primarily in Canada and the US. We have approximately 22 major branch offices, and attached to all those branch offices are the sub-jobsites. Currently, we estimate the number of sub-jobsites to be at 150. However, those numbers change on a daily basis based on jobs won or jobs completed.

As we win new construction jobs out in the field, we need to get our computer services down to those resources in remote sites. In doing so, we put servers, workstations, and domain controllers out on the site so that our remote users can connect to all of our resources. Because our environment changes so rapidly, we must be able to efficiently track its status and ensure that all of the domain controllers are replicating correctly."

The Solution

PCL Constructors uses Spotlight on Active Directory to rapidly analyze and diagnose Active Directory replication, performance and availability issues.

Why Quest

"Quest has excellent product coverage for both Windows and Active Directory. Because of this, Quest was one of the first places we started our search for a diagnostic tool."

"Because our environment changes from day to day, Quest's original licensing model didn't suit our needs. Quest was willing to work with us and come up with a flexible licensing model that perfectly fit the dynamic needs of our organization."

Business Benefits

"Merely seeing that something is wrong doesn't give an idea of what is actually causing the problem. Spotlight's drill-down capabilities allow our support staff to get more information – whether it's to solve the problem themselves or hand it off to our senior support staff. With more information available to pass off to our senior support staff, our senior technicians were able to save time and focus their attention on problem-solving instead of problem-diagnosis."

"With Spotlight, we identify problems before the user ever becomes aware of the problem. It puts us in the proactive mode rather than the reactive mode."

"With Exchange 2000, everything is integrated into Active Directory. We couldn't afford for some sites not to have e-mail as a result of our inability to know if a DC was replicating. With Spotlight, the day that Exchange went live, we could tell that every single DC was up and replicating and we knew all the components would get added to the sites out there."

"Quest was extremely responsive to our needs, and we also had the opportunity to provide feedback on the direction of their product's next version."

Technology Benefits

"Without a tool like Spotlight, we would have to manually go to each server to verify that replication is up to date. At any given time, we can have up to 300 servers in our environment, and to manually check them all, we would have to dedicate a resource to that task alone. With Spotlight, we can verify that our environment is up to date in less than an hour."

Overview

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Derek Knox
Senior Architect, PCL Constructors

Business Benefits

- Improves insight into network
- Reduces time to resolution
- Increases end-user satisfaction
- Helps to ensure uninterrupted access to business critical resources like e-mail

Technology Benefits

- Offers real-time, graphical representation of Active Directory environment and domain controller status
- Provides rapid problem diagnosis with drill-down troubleshooting and resolution
- Ensures core Active Directory processes, such as replication, are consistently functioning
- Fully integrated with Microsoft Operations Manager (MOM)



"With Spotlight, we get a graphical representation of every connection and site in our environment. It gave us the best interface available to empower our support staff to quickly view and diagnose Active Directory problems."

"Spotlight's drill-down components save us a lot of time. Being able to get an alert right up on the screen and actually drill down and diagnose that alert directly from the window improves our ability to resolve issues rapidly."

"Today, many of the new Microsoft products require a lot of changes to the Active Directory schema. Spotlight helps us to ensure that, when we roll new products forward that make changes to Active Directory, we can make sure the stability of our environment still exists."

"From a future growth perspective, we like the fact that Spotlight integrates with MOM. MOM has excellent monitoring capabilities. MOM can also page or send e-mails – it's basically the central repository. One of the issues with having six or seven tools is that if you have to go to six or seven places to look for information, it becomes just as cumbersome to me as hitting a couple hundred servers. We liked the fact that Spotlight integrated with MOM because we could tell our support staff to just go to MOM and use MOM to start drilling back into Spotlight when there was an issue which was alerted in MOM. It was a central point of contact for support."

Core Functionality

Powerful Active Directory Topology Viewer displays Active Directory replication topology with real-time status of core Active Directory processes.

Graphical, Actionable Diagnostic Console displays all Active Directory subsystems on a domain controller in a single view.

Expert Help provides explanations of Active Directory subsystems, detailed recommendations on discovered problems, links to knowledge base articles, and suggestions on how to correct the issue.

About PCL Constructors

The PCL family of companies is active in the commercial, institutional, multi-family residential, heavy industrial and civil construction sectors. As the largest general contracting organization in Canada, and among the largest in the United States, its annual billings exceed \$3 billion (Cdn) and is expected to reach \$4 billion in the next two years. PCL's work, which spans continental North America, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Caribbean, is directed out of district offices or major project offices in 25 cities. For additional information, go to www.pcl.com.