

How NHS Informatics Merseyside gained patch visibility—and a whole lot more—with Tanium



Informatics Merseyside

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Associate Director of IT, NHS Informatics Merseyside

Third-party applications: Can't patch what you can't see

Using a range of third-party applications can be a great idea. This way, an organization can select best-of-breed software for a given task, rather than compromising with a single vendor. But using many third-party software tools can also make the challenging task of patching even more challenging. To ensure all applications have up-to-date patches, organizations need very high levels of visibility. Unfortunately, not many have it.

That was the situation at NHS Informatics Merseyside. Founded in 2006, it's the digital support organization for some 25,000 National Health Service professionals working from 240 locations in Merseyside, a county in northwest England. Informatics Merseyside provides oversight and support for nearly 16,000 desktop and laptop PCs, more than 8,000 mobile devices, and some 325 digital systems. It's a big, busy job: Each year, the county's NHS users send Informatics Merseyside roughly 160,000 requests for support.

“We felt quite well-versed in terms of patching Microsoft applications, but it was all those other bits that were being used more and more in the NHS, such as the Adobe Acrobat reader, Zoom and Chrome,” says Steven Parker, associate director of IT at Informatics Merseyside. “They were giving us headaches. It was an issue we knew we had to address.”

Patching visibility — and a whole lot more

To improve the group's visibility into third-party applications, Parker and his colleagues invited Tanium to provide a proof-of-concept trial. What they saw not only solved the visibility challenge, but also held out the promise of much more.

Results

- **Single pane of glass**
Tanium replaces several other tools by providing a consolidated view of disparate third-party applications.
- **Real-time, real valuable**
Unlike many other endpoint tools, some of which rely on days-old data, Tanium provides Informatics Merseyside with live data in real time.
- **Windows updates**
Tanium helped Informatics Merseyside identify PCs with versions of Windows that had passed end-of-life and needed to be updated. That was essential when other endpoint tools failed to locate all affected devices, especially those used by employees working from home.

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“We felt Tanium could end up being a single pane of glass for a number of different systems,” Parker says. “That way, we could replace some of the other tools we use, which would also improve our return on investment.”

That also improved the “freshness” of the endpoint data Informatics Merseyside collected. Where some of its legacy endpoint tools, provided data that was days old, Tanium’s data is up-to-the minute.

“Now with the click of a button, Tanium gives us live data,” Parker says. “And you’re only as good as your last update.”

Tanium is also helping Informatics Merseyside with post-patching notifications.

“It was incredible how many of our machines had been patched, but not restarted,” says assistant director of IT Rob Tinkler. “With Tanium, now we can identify these machines, then get them restarted and provisioned.”

Looking ahead, Informatics Merseyside expects Tanium’s deployment features will help to free up staff time. One use case is self-service software deployments. Once an end user has received their manager’s approval and a cost code for a specific application, they’ll be able to install it themselves. Currently, that’s done manually by the IT staff.

“Let’s get Tanium to do that,” Tinkler says. “Then our guys can do something more interesting and valuable.”

That could also help Informatics Merseyside achieve some of its strategic organizational goals.

“We want to become more of a transformational organization, rather than a transactional one,” Parker says. “Tanium will enable us to do that.”



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