

PANASONIC HA AIR-CONDITIONING (M) SDN BHD

Hitachi JP1/Software Distribution (JP1/SD) enhances version control and consistency, improves client support and manageability, and boosts IT and end-user productivity.

Panasonic HA Air-Conditioning (M) Sdn. Bhd. (PHAAM) is a leading manufacturer and exporter of room air conditioning systems. The company's desktop management regime leverages the strengths of Hitachi JP1/SD. Using the solution, PHAAM has speeded up the distribution of new applications, patches and upgrades, improved helpdesk service to end-users, regularised its client software environment, and enhanced both IT and end-user productivity.

Established in 1972 in Malaysia, Panasonic HA Air-Conditioning (M) Sdn. Bhd. is a leading manufacturer of room air conditioners and component parts. About 80 percent of the output from its 200,000 square-metre ultra-modern plant are exported to major markets worldwide, with the remainder sold in the domestic market. The company is majority-owned by Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd. (MEI) and has a 1,180-strong staff, including a 15-strong IT team that also extends its services to a sister company, Panasonic HA Air-Conditioning R&D (M) Sdn. Bhd. (PHAARADM), located on an adjacent site.

Server-side applications in use at PHAAM include an SAP suite of enterprise applications that support the finance, human resources, and production and related functions at PHAAM. This suite interfaces with a scheduling application developed by MEI, resulting in full integration of the manufacturer's various business functions. Things are equally tidy and efficient on the client front, thanks to the use of Hitachi JP1/SD. End-user issues are resolved quickly, software version consistency is very high, software that is not work-related software is kept out, and IT team members have details of the 500 PCs connected to the company network (another 200 operate in standalone mode on the shopfloor) at their fingertips.

Before PHAAM deployed Hitachi JP1/SD, the distribution of new applications, updates and patches was done manually PC by PC. While the adoption of a standard client software set – Windows 2000 and above, Microsoft Office, Trend Micro, Internet Explorer – made this easier than if there were variety at the desktop, the large number of client PCs and their physical spread across the several buildings on the large site presented a challenge.

Two Weeks Per Patch

A typical patch or upgrade took two weeks to complete, with four IT team members working half-days. The entire process from patch installation to machine restart and confirmation that the patch went well took from fifteen to twenty minutes, and end-users had to be interrupted during the process.

While, on average, patches or upgrades are done only once every three months – urgent ones are carried

out almost immediately – PHAAM wanted to reduce or even eliminate the substantial IT man-hours needed and the loss of end-users' productive time, said Mr. Subramaniam Kesavan, Assistant General Manager, Information Systems Centre (ISC).

Another area where PHAAM saw potential for improvement was the management of client hardware and software asset inventory. The manufacturer reports asset information to its head office in Japan once a year and MEI has very exacting requirements when it comes to IT governance and the accuracy and timeliness of asset information.

"Such inventory information was captured in a master spreadsheet twice a year, with data collection timed to coincide with the quarterly patches or upgrades. However, there was a risk of the data being incorrectly or inconsistently recorded, especially when the exercise involved four persons and four spreadsheets. In addition, the master spreadsheet was not always updated and it was very difficult to track unauthorised software installed by end-users," said Mr. Au Kin Swee, Assistant Manager, ISC.

In early 2006, recognising that it could no longer afford to distribute software manually and that IT asset inventory management could do with a lot more improvement, PHAAM set about looking for a desktop management solution that could address its needs.

Its main criteria function-wise were the ability to capture PC hardware and software inventory information accurately and ease of use. Also important were the solution's investment and operating costs, reference sites with successful implementations, and solid vendor support and skills.

After evaluating several solutions, PHAAM selected Hitachi JP1/SD.

"Only Hitachi JP1/SD met all our requirements. Further appeal came from its being part of a suite of complementary system management solutions. We wanted to avoid buying a broader standalone solution and then end up under-utilising it. The modularity designed into the suite meant that we could deploy Hitachi JP1/SD and benefit from it immediately and leverage its sister solutions in future as our business and IT needs change," said Mr. Subramaniam.



Mr. Yoshihiro Oura
 Assistant General
 Manager,
 Information Systems
 Center

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Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Faster distribution of new applications, patches and upgrades ➤ Reduction of scheduled client PC downtime ➤ Quicker resolution of client support issues ➤ Visibility of client hardware and software asset information
Solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Automated distribution and installation of client software by JP1/Software Distribution ➤ Automatic and transparent distribution requires zero client PC downtime ➤ Enhanced end-user support through use of JP1/Remote Control ➤ JP1/Software Distribution provides detailed client PC information
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Software installed speeded up by more than 50% ➤ Report-to-resolve helpdesk process cut from 1 day to 1 hour ➤ 60% of support issues resolved at first level ➤ Fewer service calls, no backlog ➤ 25% reduction in support headcount ➤ Lower administrative burden on IT team ➤ Unauthorised software eliminated

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Hitachi JP1/SD went ‘live’ at PHAAM in mid-2006. Implementation was hitch-less, thanks to a well-planned schedule and tight coordination between Hitachi and ISC. The JP1/SD Administrator Kit was used to automatically and transparently install and set up the client software, so no productive time was lost.

With the solution in place, desktop management at PHAAM is vastly different from what it used to be. A company-wide upgrade or patch takes less than a week to complete, with distributions usually scheduled during lunchtime.

“New applications, patches and upgrades are distributed much faster, there is far less scheduled end-user downtime and disruption to day-to-day operations, and operating and application software are consistent and up-to-date,” said Mr. Yoshihiro Oura, Assistant General Manager, ISC.

But software distribution isn’t the only area that has been spruced up. Using the detailed hardware and software asset information collected by JP1/SD Manager from each client PC, PHAAM is now able to ensure that the number of software licences in use matches what it had purchased, that only permitted work-related software are being used, and that everyone on the network has the same software version. The information has also enabled ISC to better identify PCs due for upgrading and better assess PC upgrade requests from end-users, as well as track utilisation and, accordingly, provide advice on deleting old files, moving them to a storage archive, and so on.

Enhanced End-User Support

Having this information at hand has also enabled ISC to provide a higher level of end-user support.

Before it implemented Hitachi JP1/SD, one challenge ISC team members faced was end-users often found it difficult to describe the problems they had or to perform suggested remedial actions over the phone. As a result, ISC team members frequently had to go on-site to do troubleshooting. Given the sprawl of the PHAAM factory, this involved a lot of legwork and time, especially when parts needed to be replaced. On average, the report-to-resolve process took a full day. The same process now takes an hour at the maximum.

“With the Remote Control feature, we can now gain control of problematic client PCs remotely and troubleshoot them from our desks. Together with the asset information, this has resulted in our being able to resolve about sixty percent of support cases at the first level. Cases that require further attention get resolved faster, too. As a matter of fact, we now have fewer support requests so there’s no longer a backlog,” said Mr. Au.

PHAAM’s much tidier desktop environment has resulted in a significantly reduced burden on the ISC team, allowing it to trim the size of the support team from four persons to three (the fourth was deployed to a sister company). More importantly, Mr. Subramaniam added, team members can now devote more time and attention to planning new applications and upgrades aimed at improving both factory productivity and administrative productivity.

More Hitachi JP1 Solutions

Going forward, PHAAM plans to leverage Hitachi JP1/SD’s sister solutions for desktop management in the near future. Among these are Hitachi JP1/Asset Information Manager and Hitachi JP1/Client Security Control. The former will provide asset information management capabilities that are more comprehensive than that provided by Hitachi JP1/SD, while the latter will enable the company to centrally manage security measures at the end-user level. The ISC team will also be helping PHAAM’s sister company, PHAARADM, to implement Hitachi JP1/SD for its 170-PC client environment.

“We have every confidence in Hitachi’s ability to help us manage and accelerate our future IT innovations and plans. Using Hitachi JP1/SD, we’ve improved service levels to users, speeded up software distribution, eliminated unauthorised software, and gained visibility of the desktop environment,” said Mr. Oura.

“These have enabled us to meet corporate IT governance and asset reporting requirements with greater confidence and accuracy, as well as helped the IT team to move on to value-added tasks. When implemented, Hitachi JP1/AIM and Hitachi JP1/CSC will bring an even higher level of integration into our IT environment and we’re looking forward to working with Hitachi again.”

About Panasonic HA Air-Conditioning (M) Sdn. Bhd.

Panasonic HA Air-Conditioning (M) Sdn. Bhd. is a leading manufacturer of room air conditioners and components. It exports more than two-thirds of its output to markets in Europe, the Middle East, the United States, and Asia (including Japan). The company is majority-owned by Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd. of Japan.

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