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California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Centers Rely on DSMETER to Meet HIPAA Compliance Requirements and Secure Enterprise Data

Cutting Reporting Time From Days to Minutes

California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) centers have discovered a surefire method for meeting compliance requirements and addressing audit demands while also securing enterprise data from various threats.

DDS provides services for over 185,000 children and adults with developmental disabilities and 26,000 infants at risk of developmental delays or disabilities through state-operated developmental centers. This case study focuses on three such centers that currently use Visual Click Software's DSMETER for NetWare product.

Challenges: Complying with HIPAA and Securing Data

During the summer and fall of 2006, Systems Administrators for California DDS centers began seeking more effective ways to monitor their networks and defend their enterprise data.

Systems Administrators from various DDS facilities found their existing methods of monitoring and reporting to be too cumbersome and time intensive to meet the expanding mandates and compliance requirements associated with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). These centers are active users of Novell platforms; however, NetWare proved too rigid and complex for the task of gathering the requisite reporting data.

"The HIPAA mandate forced us to seek a tool that would enable us to manage our network better and monitor various factors," says Surachai Intarapravich, Information Systems Director at the Sonoma Developmental Center in Eldridge, California. "We needed to monitor the network for intruders and strange logins – anything that might indicate a network security breach. We used to have to go through the log files to find such information – a time-consuming chore. Now, we can go right to it."

DDS Systems Administrators were also concerned with streamlining the processes for tracking the deletion or modification of network and group files. "It's a problem when a file is moved or deleted and nobody knows where it went," says Raghbir Sangha, Associate Information Systems Analyst at Sierra Vista DDS in Yuba City, California. "It could be an accident. It could be intentional. These documents are assets. Management would want to know what happened to files, and we would have to spend a lot of time tracking the information down."



"We expect HIPAA audits down the line, and we want to ensure we are compliant," says Kevin Curtis, Information Systems Manager at Canyon Springs DDS. "DSMETER will help demonstrate that we are performing our due diligence with respect to compliance."

DDS developmental centers sought ways to audit file access as well. Systems Administrators wanted to ensure that individuals do not have inappropriate access to groups and files. Again, Novell's utilities proved too wieldy to monitor these issues quickly and effectively. "I set up all the rights, but I can't be 100% thorough up front," says Kevin Curtis, Information Systems Manager at Canyon Springs DDS in Cathedral City. "I need to be able to see who is accessing which files. People need to have enough information about clients, for instance, to do their jobs. No more than that."

Action: Investing in DSMETER

While DDS developmental centers each manage IT and network administration independently, their IT staff leaders and consultants actively share information about current challenges and potential solutions. One of California's government technology partners referred some DDS Systems Administrators to Visual Click and recommended that they evaluate the company's software. These evaluations ultimately led to these centers investing in Visual Click's DSMETER for NetWare, a NetWare Loadable Module (NLM)-based platform designed specifically to audit and restrict access to enterprise data. By the fall of 2006, the software was implemented and in use at DDS facilities.

Results: Time Savings, Secure Networks

DDS developmental centers report positive results from their investments in DSMETER. The benefits noted most frequently by these System Administrators are time savings and ease of use.

The Sierra Vista Center's Associate IS Analyst, Raghbir Sangha, found the Novell Nsure Audit tool difficult to configure and complicated to use. With DSMETER for NetWare, he can rapidly take the steps necessary to search and monitor relevant folders. "When management wants to know what happened with certain files, we can track them down quickly," he says. "You don't have to run it on all the servers or go through all the logs, which was the case with the prior tool. DSMETER narrows down the search."

Kevin Curtis, of the Canyon Springs DDS center, originally used DSMETER to isolate hidden objects. Now, he cites multiple benefits of the product. "One thing we are now able to do is monitor the logins and logouts of people for historical purposes," he says. "We expect HIPAA audits down the line, and we want to ensure we are compliant. DSMETER will help demonstrate that we are performing our due diligence with respect to compliance."

Sonoma's Intarapravich reports that the tool has "saved me time blocking JPEG and MP3 files and watching for intruders." He notes that it has also facilitated the process of isolating password and account problems associated with user logins. In addition to these time-saving features, DSMETER enables his team to produce reports in minutes that once took his department days to produce. Such results enable Intarapravich to spend his time performing activities that generate more value for the organization. "I can now concentrate on other areas and manage my department better," he says. "We don't have the manpower to focus on tedious, low-priority tasks. We have to work smarter, and DSMETER has helped us do just that."



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About Visual Click Software

Envisioned in 1996 and incorporated in 1999, Visual Click is the leader and pioneer in visually customizable computer network security access management and reporting applications.

Network Security Access Management: Our [patented](#) Visual Designer Technology allows for customer-specific applications to be developed in minutes rather than days, weeks or months. This powerful technology creates a new paradigm in network security access management. Previous technology either required use of overly large and complex 'consoles' that performed slowly and required product-specific training or required customized programming.

Our technology allows customers to create exactly what they need to control their network security access management without burdening the Administrator or requiring custom computer programming costs.

Network Security Reporting: Our [patented](#) Visual Designer Technology allows for customer-defined reports to be developed in minutes with very little training. This powerful technology allows the Network Administrator to focus on the important matters of securing a network. With minor customizations, each Network Security Report can simultaneously be used for Network Security Access Management. Each Network Security Report can also be used to change the Network Security issues it uncovers. This important technology solves two problems at the same time, namely, reporting about Network Security non-compliance and enforcing corporate Network Security policy.

Customer Benefits: Exceeding customer expectations is our number one goal. We know time is a resource that most IT professionals have in short supply. For this reason, our software is designed to reduce errors and minimize training costs, thereby freeing up valuable time to focus on more mission-critical tasks.

Also, so our customers can get the exact product functionality they need, we offer our Create My Solution™ service for expert custom reports and management applets.

From simplifying user management and maintaining regulatory compliance, to preparing for migration and delegating helpdesk duties, our software empowers our customers by saving them time and money associated with managing their networked environments.

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