

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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M. Suresh Kumar,
Assistant GM, Information Services Department

About Northport (Malaysia) Berhad

Northport (Malaysia) Berhad, a subsidiary of NCB Holdings Berhad, is Malaysia's largest port operator. The 24 x 7 port operator handles about 70% of the country's domestic cargo and reported a throughput of 2.63 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) for 2005.

URL: <http://www.northport.com.my>



Northport (Malaysia) Berhad

Hitachi JP1 Software Distribution brings order to heterogeneous client environment featuring 700 PCs scattered across the enterprise.

Northport (Malaysia) Berhad is Malaysia's largest port operator. Its client PC environment features a variety of operating systems, applications and processors. Together with the 24x7 nature of Northport's operations and the fact that some client machines are shared, this made desktop management very challenging, especially when it comes to software distribution and patch management. Using Hitachi JP1 Software Distribution, Northport has more than met this challenge and now has an orderly, efficient and secure client environment.

Formed in 2000 from the merger of Klang Container Terminal with Klang Port Management, Northport (Malaysia) Berhad is Malaysia's largest port operator. In 2005, 81 shipping lines as well as 44 conventional and 502 container vessels made approximately 8,000 ship calls to Northport facilities, providing services to 300 ports of call worldwide.

The port operator, which handles about 70% of the country's domestic cargo, has four lines of business: containerised cargo services delivered at two container terminals and a quayline, marine services, conventional cargo services, and distripark services. These services are provided on a 24x7 basis, and are supported by mission-critical IT applications kept in tip-top condition by the 32-strong Information Services Department (ISD) which, like the four business divisions, work three shifts. The department also tends to the IT needs of Northport's back-office and supporting departments, in addition to providing IT-based services to the port operator's customers.

Given the legacies of Northport's parents and its policy of upgrading IT assets only when there is a clear benefit to the business, the client PC environment – more than 700 end-users spread across the enterprise – is as varied as the services that the port operator provides, with no standard client platform hardware configuration- and software version-wise. The spread for operating system ranges from Windows 95 to Windows XP Professional; that for processor type from the 486 chip to the latest Pentium 4.

This variety made for unwieldy management of the client environment and placed a high demand on ISD's resources. Software distribution and patch management were especially difficult, a challenge compounded by the round-the-clock nature of Northport's operations and the fact that some client machines were shared among users.

Manual Rollouts & Patches

"What we did for software rollouts and patches was to install the software or patch at each PC. End-user operations had to be interrupted and arranging a timeslot convenient to both ISD and each end-user could be difficult, especially for machines used by the lines of business and shared PCs. Sometimes patches had to be coordinated across shifts. Our policy is to start managing a patch within a week of its notification from the software vendor, so things were pretty rushed," said M. Suresh Kumar, Assistant General Manager, ISD.

Patches typically took more than a week to complete across the entire enterprise. Even then, problems related to compatibility of the patch



Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Improve software distribution and patch management ●Facilitate quarterly hardware and software audit ●Enhance end-user support ●Minimise Web downloads of unauthorised software
Solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Centralised asset management of client hardware and software using JP1/Software Distribution ●Helpdesk support including remote control using JP1/Remote Control ●Distribution management of software using JP1/Software Distribution
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Automated distribution of software ●More productive IT and end-user staff ●Improved IT governance ●Swift problem diagnosis and resolution ●Better visibility and allocation of IT assets

with installed system or application software could crop up, placing an even heavier demand on the department, which also had to manage other client management areas including end-user support, service level agreements with the business units, copyright observance, and a quarterly hardware and software audit of client PCs.

Recognising the opportunity for improving this sub-optimal scheme of things – in particular, software distribution – Northport set about looking for a solution that could streamline and automate as many aspects of client management as possible. One critical factor: the solution had to work with all the flavours of Windows in use at Northpoint. The port operator evaluated several solutions and only Hitachi JP1 Software Distribution, part of the Hitachi Job Management Partner 1 suite of systems management solutions, met this key criterion.

“Hitachi JP1 Software Distribution allowed us to avoid spending on Windows and application upgrades for more than half of our PCs. We also found the software easy to use, pricing was cost-effective, and licensing options were flexible. It also has a small memory footprint, which meant we could run it on an existing server without adversely impacting the performance of our other mission-critical applications,” said Mr. Kumar.

After piloting Hitachi JP1 Software Distribution for two weeks, Northport implemented it across the entire organisation in mid 2004 – and has been reaping significant benefits since then. These include what Mr. Kumar calls “hidden benefits” from the ability of Hitachi JP1 Software Distribution to not just streamline and automate software rollouts and patch management, but to also retrieve and manage the inventory information (hardware information, software installation status and version, and user-specific inventory information) of each client PC in the corporate network. Northpoint then integrates this information into a third-party asset management system, thus gaining a clear, expansive view of its client environment.

Shipshape Client Environment

With the information served up by Hitachi JP1 Software Distribution, Northport is now able to tell who installed what, which PC has been moved without authorisation,

who the power users are, which software versions and combinations are most problematic, identify which PCs to replace or upgrade, and so on – all without having to physically examine the PC or interrupt the end-user.

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While it previously could manage to patch up to 10 PCs a day, the ISD is now able to complete the task for the entire enterprise in just over a day, thanks to such functionalities as dynamic scheduling of patches, remote ‘patch and reboot’, and automated distribution. End-user support has improved at least 50%, the time taken for client PC audit has been slashed from two months to two days, Northport is 100% compliant with copyright legislation, and Web downloads of illegal or unauthorised software has plummeted. End-users are also now more productive, as their work is now longer disrupted during software rollouts and patch management, their PCs are better matched with their needs, and their problems get resolved faster.

“The biggest benefit we’ve realised from the use of Hitachi JP1 Software Distribution is our Networks Operations and Office Automation team can now focus on areas that are most critical to the business, where they add the most value not just to ourselves but to our customers as well,” said Mr. Kumar.

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