Encore Technologies streamlines legacy automation with Bolt

CASE STUDY

Industry: IT automation and DevOps for enterprise clients
Customer Environment: Mix of Windows and Linux servers, under management

Challenges
Encore needed full configuration management to cut down on manual tasks. This allowed them to put energy toward innovative solutions for implementing better, faster legacy environment automation.

Solution
Encore used Bolt to better orchestrate and streamline manual tasks for debugging, patching, and troubleshooting issues.

Results
- Significant decrease in client occurrences of issues with critical business impact
- Engineer time redirected to revenue-driving activities
- Better code management
- Quicker introduction of new features and services
- Freed up priority for developing and implementing new automation
“In our search for an automation tool, Puppet ended up winning based on its great community and large number of high-quality modules available on the Forge. Both were valuable in the work we needed the tool to accomplish.”

Nick Maludy, Director, Encore Technologies’ DevOps team

Automating in legacy environments

Working with clients along their automation journeys, Encore turned to Puppet for automation tools to best discover and solve the issues in their clients’ workflows. The advantages of continuously enforcing the state of server configurations provided by Puppet were useful, but Encore knew they needed an additional tool to orchestrate and run ad hoc automation tasks as well. “We had certain pieces of the puzzle in the provisioning stack and in our own internal operations where we had one-off tasks that needed attention,” said Nick Maludy, director of the Encore Technologies DevOps team. “Bolt provided that.”

Streamlining automation, addressing root issues

Puppet has maintained its status as a leader in the industry for the past ten years. After evaluating other automation options, Encore turned to Puppet for its community and available modules in Puppet Forge. At that point, Encore was in need of a tool to redirect engineer efforts away from the manual, repetitive, and time-consuming bug patching, a process prone to human error, toward the work that set them apart with their clients as a managed service provider.

Hours were going toward troubleshooting that Encore wanted to redirect to their clients’ needs. To focus on their clients’ growth, Encore relied on an agentless automation tool, Bolt for point-in-time changes, installation of critical packages, and deployment of patches to maintain and evolve system settings.

As a result, one client company experienced a decrease of those critical, business-wide impact “Priority 1” issue occurrences from multiple in a day, to one in a year. Encore also saw tasks run for clients take 90 seconds that initially took 30 minutes out of their engineers’ time.

“Bolt has helped us onboard the operations of new technologies faster. Whether we’re managing an existing system or implementing our own, we use Bolt to wrap those operations tasks into automation pieces. That’s been good for us.”

Nick Maludy
Director, Encore Technologies’ DevOps team
Adjusting to engineer expertise, not the other way around

Incorporating Bolt allowed Encore to simplify tasks that previously required multiple steps and significant drains of time to scale large-scale solutions to all relevant servers.

Within Encore, it’s had the benefit of faster employee onboarding, in addition to versioning changes within infrastructure, by allowing the company to continue using its own scripts and yaml. Rather than have to adjust to new scripting languages, engineers can continue using those they have already-developed expertise with.

The result was a quick implementation process that uniquely combined the skills of Encore’s engineers with the rapid agentless automation of Bolt.

“We use Bolt to wrap operations tasks into automation pieces so we can quickly add those things to our toolkit,” Nick said. “It’s meant a natural evolution over time. We’re able to start with the most painful, basic automation, and that frees us up later to get into the nitty-gritty details of that last 10, 20 percent, and that suite of automation is expanding out into all sorts of little, cool things which allow us to provide that advanced expert advice to our clients.”

Top outcomes from using Bolt

- Reduced engineer time spent patching and debugging
- Decreased critical client “Priority 1” issues
- Rapid engineer adaptation and use of Bolt tool
- Improved automation in legacy environments

“We find Bolt and Puppet helped us implement software changes cost effectively—now we’re able to spend more time developing new automation, rather than having to keep old gear afloat.”

Nick Maludy
Director, Encore Technologies’ DevOps team