LV= Delivers More Value (at Lower Cost) with Puppet Enterprise

CASE STUDY

Industry
Financial Services

Background
Founded in 1843, LV= is one of the largest insurance companies and the largest friendly society in the United Kingdom, employing 6,000 people and serving over five million members and customers. It offers a wide range of products from car, home, pet, travel and life insurance to investment and retirement solutions.

Challenge
Many environments to build and manage with a small, dedicated team.

Solution
Puppet Enterprise

Results
LV= can ship faster with fewer failures.
Top outcomes of using Puppet Enterprise

• **Better build quality.** Before Puppet, the database administration teams that manage Oracle installations were receiving builds they couldn’t use as-is, so they had to modify them, and even started writing their own scripts. Once Puppet Enterprise was brought on board, the DBA teams have been getting what they need for standard Oracle builds. Now they can move more quickly, and simply add on modules as needed.

• **Improved change quality.** With Puppet Enterprise, everyone, including the change management team, has confidence in the quality of changes. That’s because as changes go through the different environments — dev, test, pre-production — everyone has high confidence that these upstream environments look just like production. Problems are being spotted at the early stages, with the result that change management now identifies all production changes as low-risk, allowing them to go through quickly. Essentially, changing the production server environment is now a non-event.

• **More complete auditing.** The team used to supply internal auditors with Word docs, which never answered all the auditors’ questions. The team can now share Puppet manifests, which are pretty easy for anyone to read. Auditors can see exactly how the team assures secure status, and how Puppet enforces that status.

• **Fewer incidents.** LV= hit a milestone that wouldn’t have been possible a year ago: the company had its first month without any Tier 1 incidents. A year earlier, these high-priority incidents occurred pretty frequently, so a month without one means that the IT team enjoys greater predictability and more room to do higher-level work.

Starting environment

The LV= IT environment consists of about 1,000 heterogeneous nodes. LV= began with open source Puppet in 2007, and upgraded to Puppet Enterprise in March 2013. The move to Puppet Enterprise allowed the IT team to spend less time putting together and securing packages, and more time focusing on strategic work.

Key objectives

• **Improve build quality.** The build process at LV= was quite manual, including handcrafting of scripts, so work had to be sent back regularly for fixes. This was a massive time sink for everyone involved, and delayed deploy times.

• **Improve change management.** LV= wanted a more holistic approach to change management to shorten the software development lifecycle.

• **Reporting.** Like many financial services companies, reporting and auditing requirements for LV= are extensive. Rather than relying on Word docs that described builds in detail, LV= wanted faster, more comprehensive reports for the IT team that could also be easily read by auditors.
Why Puppet Enterprise?

• **A complete product for greater value.** While LV=’s IT team is sophisticated and has the ability to meld different components into a solution, Puppet Enterprise is already packaged and tested as a complete solution, ready to go. That gave the Unix team time to work on projects that add greater value to the business. Furthermore, Puppet Enterprise was a more financially sound choice, according to Jon Nangle. “We added up the numbers, and having it all available to us was better than doing it ourselves.”

• **Support.** As LV= rolls out Puppet Enterprise across more of the organization, full support becomes more important, especially for people outside the Unix team.

• **Reporting.** Instead of the team having to sift through log files, Puppet Enterprise provides admins a graphical view of infrastructure changes, enabling them to see quickly what has changed, and how those changes happened.