Leading Tech Hardware Manufacturer Advances with ENow Monitoring and Reporting

The customer

NCS Technologies, Inc., (NCST) founded in 1996, is a leading computer manufacturer and system integrator specializing in the public sector. As a Microsoft Partner, they collaborate closely with government agencies, crafting rugged computers tailored to their exact requirements.

"From our facility in Northern Virginia, we deliver products and services to customers who are located all over the world. We believe in doing right by our customers, partners, and employees, and we take pride in our creativity, flexibility, and agility."

The challenge

In 2023, the NCST IT Department found themselves at a crossroads; a seismic shift had to happen with their on-premises IT infrastructure, and they had to make some difficult, important decisions around implementing cloud-based changes. The organization had been operating on an antiquated network for some time, and they were behind on updates. Their Exchange 2016 servers were prone to crashing, failing over and taking hours, so the writing on the wall became very apparent – the servers had to be rebuilt and upgraded in preparation for eventually moving assets to the cloud.

NCST needed a solution to initially help monitor Active Directory and Exchange (running off 2012 Domain Controllers and Exchange 2016) as changes to the infrastructure were made incrementally and the environment was upgraded. The first phase of this digital transformation took around four months, but it could've taken much longer if the organization hadn't utilized the ENow Management System (EMS) Monitoring and Reporting solutions throughout the process.

While the organization does utilize other monitoring solutions for cybersecurity purposes, their IT teams found the configuration difficult and weren't fully getting what they needed as far as monitoring their network and servers. Conversely, AD & Exchange Administrator at NCST, Jim Kuterbach, got the ENow Solution up and running in 15 minutes.

Future Needs

NCST is planning a full migration to the cloud in 2024, and they intend to leverage the EMS solution for migration preparation in various ways – taking inventory, figuring out distribution lists, amongst many other granular tasks. Kuterbach explained that while there is undoubtedly value in knowing what you have, NCST found greater value in discovering what they don't need.

For example, during this inventory and discovery process before the migration, many organizations often uncover users who no longer work for the company, distribution lists that haven't been used in years, and many terabytes of mail that can be eradicated. The ENow reporting solution can quickly obtain these numbers, making the migration process less complicated. These are objects you likely don't need in your environment to begin with; and you don't want to carry them over to the cloud with you.
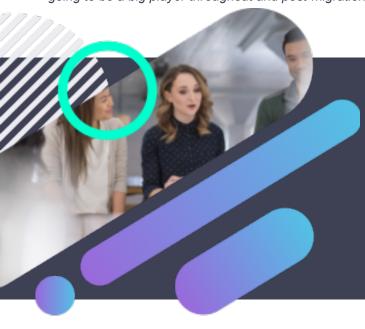
With the ENow reports, NCST quickly determined that some of those mailboxes needed to be kept as shared mailboxes. NCST found the ENow reporting solution instrumental during this process because they were able to run a report and easily ascertain exactly how much mail was in those mailboxes, how big they were, the last time they were checked, and if there were delegations assigned, among other helpful information for decision-making.

They plan to continue utilizing the ENow M365 Monitoring and Reporting solution once they migrate fully to the cloud, as well as ENow's App Governance Accelerator for Entra ID application monitoring. As Kuterbach explains, "*I'm going to need this product to monitor M365 – it's going to be a big player throughout and post-migration.*"

The Solution

Kuterbach finds the reporting output extremely helpful and considers it a key driver – "*The reports are really what is driving usage of the ENow product at NCST.*" Some of their favorite business critical features and uses include:

- **Instantaneous notifications –** quick realizations because of the stoplight system and OneLook dashboard which saves them time, as they can quickly identify areas that could be in trouble and need to be examined.

- **The visibility it provides –** the team can view the environment and understand their downstream ramifications when they make changes.

- **Using the tool for "cleanup"** – identifying old servers and equipment that aren't online anymore, which is helping the NCST IT Teams re-mold the entire environment.

- **Eliminating guesswork –** with many servers in their network, the ENow monitoring tool quickly pinpoints the exact server that may be experiencing issues and the exact area and provides a quick and clear path to remediation.

- **Historical data –** having this data enabled the NCST IT department to refine its approach and retrofit future builds. For example, if building another SAP server was necessary, the ENow reports provided crucial historical data of usage over time, providing them with the information and ability to pivot and potentially add more memory to the new server if warranted. As the organization continued to upgrade and expand the capabilities of the IT department, it was important to grasp the big picture – where they currently were and where they needed to be.

> **I'm going to need this product to monitor Microsoft 365 – it's going to be a big player throughout and post-migration.**
>
> **JIM KUTERBACH**
> Active Directory & Exchange Administrator
> NCS Technologies, Inc.

Internal Use Cases

The ENow solution is utilized by many roles in the NCST IT Department. From engineering support, user support, web and SAP admins to analysts, and project managers and those responsible for Security, SQL and SEC. Each of these individuals utilize the EMS Monitoring and Reporting solution to streamline their job functions in some capacity.

Business Case - ENow Reports

NCST had very specific, rigorous reporting needs for some specific tasks in addition to the upgrades – they were in the process of trying to obtain their NIST Tier 1 and then Level 2 Certification. The team had to run an extensive number of reports for their investigation, and not only was the ENow solution pivotal in helping them obtain the information they needed to gather, but it also expedited the process tremendously.

Since NCST primarily deals with public-sector agencies, Compliance and regulations play a very big role in everything IT does, especially since NCST potentially handles CUI (Controlled Unclassified Information) for some clients. The speed to market with the certification was important because the organization was unable to move forward with advancing to the cloud until the certifications were obtained. There was also an aggressive deadline for completing this initiative by the end of Q4'24.

Alleviated Pain Points

During the first phase of this initiative around monitoring and optimizing their environment, many of NCST's woes revolved around cleaning up and sanitizing their environment, i.e. identifying and removing the users no longer with the organization. At that time, it was prudent for NCST to seek and find a solution capable of running specific reports that would provide the granular data they required: who the inactive users were, what department they worked for, who their manager was/is, etc. – so the team could make informed decisions pertaining to the migration around keeping certain mailboxes or continuing to forward some.

NCST also had some very specific reporting needs that the ENow solution was able to seamlessly accommodate:

- Reports that could drill down to see how many users and who they are, in each organizational unit.

- Reports showing which users have passwords that never expire, as this would have prevented NCST from receiving their NIST certification(s).

- Reports to determine which users had passwords that hadn't been changed in the past 90 days. This was another 'big one' – and they wanted to put a Group Policy Object (GPO) in place to ensure the password changes were happening. Additionally, PowerShell scripts were put into play to make sure the user was notified of the action they needed to take around their password status.

As far as Compliance is concerned, the organization relies on the ENow Management System reports to show them mailbox delegations, what types of permissions certain users have, and which users are allowed to perform certain functions on what machines and devices.

> ❝ The ability to co-innovate with the ENow team to better serve our organization's needs has been a huge plus as a long-time user. ENow has always been very receptive to client feedback and collaboration. By working with ENow directly, I now can write my own reports, make recommendations, or just modify the reports myself, which provides incredible value to my role, my team, and my organization. ❞

Jim Kuterbach
Active Directory & Exchange Administrator, NCS Technologies, Inc.

ENow Monitoring & Reporting

NCST was initially attracted to ENow because of the synergy between their needs and ENow's solution that would help monitor their on-premises Active Directory and Exchange environments while cloud-forward upgrades to the infrastructure will be made incrementally.

While the uptime of servers and infrastructure is critical for all organizations in that situation, for NCST, it was a little different since the organization was completely dependent upon SQL/SAP servers and, per SLAs, must be up and running at least 99.9% of the time. Downtime is not an option – therefore, monitoring became a business-critical need.

The Result

The EMS Monitoring and Reporting immediately checked all the boxes for NCSTs needs. Easy to install, configure, and get up and running; from the moment it was installed, they immediately derived value through the overall, in-depth knowledge of their environment that they gleaned through monitoring. The EMS Monitoring and OneLook dashboard provide the tools that NCST's IT department needs to keep things safe, consistent, and productive.

Utilized as a "business critical," everyday tool across critical roles in the IT department, the EMS Reporting capabilities streamline their business operations as well. With the ability to judiciously drill-down into the details of their environment, this eliminates guesswork by clearly indicating where the issue is, and how stable the network is; thereby saving valuable time for the team during mitigation scenarios.

ENow Monitoring

ENow's one-look dashboard is an intuitive, visual approach to monitoring Active Directory, Exchange, and Microsoft 365. Monitor all your environments' vital components with a quick glance at a single screen, even from your phone or tablet. Empower your help desk and enable them to improve SLAs.

ENow Reporting

ENow's reporting provides both the real-time data and historical trending you need to optimize system performance, improve service levels, gain clear visibility into infrastructure, and plan for the future. Equipped with over 220 reports out of the box, you can hit the ground running while providing the flexibility to easily customize reports to meet your organization's specific needs.

Business impacts:

- Improved system uptime
- Reduced costs through resource optimization
- Faster compliance achievement
- Streamlined migration to the cloud

About ENow Software
ENow solutions optimize the service delivery of mission-critical Microsoft collaboration and identity infrastructure. Our digital experience monitoring and analytics for Entra ID, Active Directory, Exchange, and Microsoft 365 transform the way IT supports these complex services, enabling organizations to improve service delivery, increase workplace productivity, and lower total cost of ownership while maintaining robust security against unauthorized access.