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Florida Environmental Resources Agency Picks BOSS DiagWin Asset Management Software to Track Information Technology Resources

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., Nov. 16 /PRNewswire/ -- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection acquired licensing for more than 5,000 workstations for BOSS, Inc.'s DiagWin network management software to track networked information technology assets deployed throughout the state in regional offices, laboratories and state parks.

BOSS, based in Norcross, Ga., also recently won certification as an authorized vendor for the U.S. General Services Administration, the general procurement agency for the federal government. The GSA certification also streamlines procurement of BOSS products by state and local government agencies in Florida and elsewhere throughout the United States.

Jonathan Canter, assistant data center director and point man for the Department of Environmental Protection on information resources management and

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planning, said he pushed to acquire the BOSS DiagWin solution primarily to take inventory of the entire agency's disparate systems and software. But he added that DiagWin also will be useful in helping the agency with security and performance-related issues like tracking spyware and other unauthorized software on the network.

"Our department is like a giant shoebox," said Canter, "and the technology deployed in the divisions is like a bunch of marbles rolling around inside. We need to have inventory on demand and DiagWin gives that to us."

The inventory process itself is particularly daunting because of the network infrastructure and the structure of the organization. The agency has about 4,500 full-time employees, but also relies on between 1,500 to 1,700 part-time workers and contractors, all of whom use network-connected workstations. Each of the agency's seven divisions, including one that manages 180 state parks, receives separate funding through legislative appropriations and, as a result, functions somewhat independently as far as technology purchases and centralized management is concerned. In the past, Canter said, information-gathering procedures were so erratic that year-end inventory numbers often did not match beginning-year inventories in the department's annual technology report and other documents.

Most of the workstations are Microsoft Windows-based PCs, running either Windows 2000 or Windows XP. But the organization also has a development team that, among other things, produces forms and other resources for Oracle database applications running under Red Hat Linux. For technical support and local IT management, each division also relies on personnel with varying degrees of technical expertise - including some whose tech support roles are only part of their jobs. And the network itself ranges from sophisticated, enterprise-worthy broadband connections to 56-KB dial-up modems sometimes connected to the network through AOL or other Internet Services Providers.

BOSS DiagWin deploys as a Windows-based central management console that, without any interaction from the user, pushes a thin client application to each user's workstation, regardless of the operating system running on that machine. Once installed, DiagWin will collect detailed information about hardware, firmware and software running on each machine and automatically feed it into a central database and centralized console view. Managers have a wide range of preset and customizable forms as part of DiagWin's robust reporting capabilities for inventory management.

"We were really impressed by the simplicity of operations," said Canter. "Other systems we evaluated did not allow for the disparate layers that you can turn on and off. With the system installed on servers, each division can handle its own inventory in a simplistic way for local needs, but when we need information about the entire network, it will be available to us."

Canter said that for the past five years he's been pushing, primarily through the department's council of divisional IT managers, to establish some kind of network hardware and software inventory discipline. After vetting BOSS's DiagWin against other management utilities he concluded that it was easy enough for moderately proficient technical personnel to handle at the local level but also provided an enterprise-wide view of network resources.

Vish Ramakrishnan, BOSS technical sales engineer who oversees the DiagWin rollout, said that DiagWin is an excellent solution for enterprises like the Florida Department of Environmental Protection because there is very little deployment overhead. "They can still have decentralized operations but collect centralized management information they need for analysis, reporting, policy-making and other departmental management functions."

The Florida state departmental hierarchy and divisional independence is not unique in government at state, national or local government levels. Although most would derive extreme benefits from centralized activities like purchasing and help desk for all departments, few have been able to crack the code of making that happen in politically charged bureaucracies. However, as budgetary pressures mount on all, Canter says that some governments are starting to look to prospects of massive software and hardware licensing deals, for example, as a means of saving taxpayers "a ton of money." But, he added, you can't really make that happen until you have established management discipline throughout your IT network infrastructure.

One of the key functions of the BOSS DiagWin software enables large enterprises to collect information required for enterprise-wide software audits and licensing, said Ramakrishnan. "When the state of Florida gets ready to do that," he said, "DiagWin will be there to help them."

About BOSS

Founded in 1991, Norcross, Ga.-based BOSS, Inc. provides information technology asset management software and services for enterprises in the government, healthcare, manufacturing, financial, and business and professional services sectors. The Microsoft Gold Software Development Partner's flagship Windows-based products, DiagWin and U-Win, handle hardware and software inventory, deployment and maintenance, and security functions in any size heterogeneous enterprise network environment. For more information visit <http://www.boss-solutions.com> or call 800.317.6639.

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