

Patching is a particular bane in admin and support lives, but there's no need for this to be the case any more. Modern patch management can take the weight off IT's shoulders, explains **Robert Jaques**

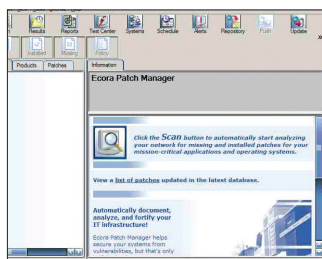
Patch management has been a top concern in the security space for some time now, as the hackers become ever more competent at producing exploit code within days of a vulnerability being disclosed. The need to identify unpatched systems, eval-

uate risk and coordinate the deployment of software updates across a wide range of operating systems, applications and devices is paramount, but is still extraordinarily difficult for most organizations. While no single technology is able to solve the

problem, a range of products offer patch management capabilities which can significantly lighten the load. SC Magazine evaluated several of these to identify tools most suitable for the demands of the modern IT operating environment.



Ecora Patch Manager



Version	3.2.5
Supplier	Ecora
Price	1,000 nodes at \$17 per node
Contact	www.ecora.com

This company has become well known for its patch management product and this latest version continues to do a thorough job.

Although it is mainly aimed at Windows, the product will patch Sun Solaris systems as well. It also has support for SQL Server, Exchange, Office 2000/XP and IIS, to name but a few.

The interface is clearly laid out and pleasing to the eye. Buttons along the top guide the adminis-

trator to common tasks.

The process of scanning for computers is very intuitive and the agentless patch deployment saves administrators shoe leather as well as time.

We scanned our testbed of servers and computers in little time. Ecora Patch Manager stores details of computer hardware (inventory) in either an SQL Server database or in the MSDE database.

As with other patch management products in this group test, hardware can be grouped together for administration purposes, and patches can be rolled out in an appropriate manner.

The software downloads patches from Microsoft's website and stores them in a cache, or repository. What this boils down to is that, should many machines need the same patch, it only has to download the patch once from the website.

The rest can be installed from

the repository. Naturally, this significantly speeds up the whole patching process.

There is also, as seen in other products tested in this group, a patch roll-back function in case there are clashes.

The interface lists computers in there various states, and the view can be filtered to show which machines require which patches.

Information on individual patches can be obtained via the interface. Not only can TechNet pages be viewed, there are also a number of other links administrators can look at to find out more on a particular patch.

The policy manager allows administrators to create general rules on how patches should be deployed and which groups of computers get patched.

We found it easy to create policies in the software.

Reporting is very good, although this requires installation on a Windows server running IIS.

SC MAGAZINE RATING	
Features	★★★★☆
Ease of use	★★★★☆
Performance	★★★★☆
Documentation	★★★★☆
Support	★★★★☆
Value for money	★★★★☆
OVERALL RATING	★★★★☆
For Agentless deployment and web access.	
Against Patches have to initially come from Microsoft instead of a mirror.	
Verdict Friendly interface makes this one of the easiest to use and deploy.	

Update: Patch Manager 4.0 Released

Since the time of this review, Ecora released Patch Manager 4.0.

Its new optional agent technology provides users with a simultaneous, single-console, agent-less, and agent-based deployment option to quickly deliver complete patch management throughout unique

computing environments.

Offering users the most flexible and comprehensive automated patch management solution, Patch Manager 4.0 supports all networked systems, including laptop users that only connect periodically to the corporate network.

Users also benefit with improved performance and scalability by reducing network traffic and minimizing bandwidth consumption.

With a centralized, browser-based reporting center, users generate graphical reports to monitor ongoing patch compliance.



2 International Dr.
Suite 150
Portsmouth, NH
03801
603.436.1616
sales@ecora.com
www.ecora.com