

Cormant-CS Infrastructure Management versus Active Patching Solution

Paul Goodison, CEO Cormant, Inc.

Michael Salvador, Technical Solutions Manager-Data Centers

This document provides a brief overview of why Cormant-CS is the ideal, complete solution to IT infrastructure, asset and connectivity management for the physical IT layer.

More than a patch panel

A customer requires control of their IT infrastructure. This fact is based on feedback Cormant has gathered from users of infrastructure management. This requirement is far more than just managing data connectivity and patch panels. Consider that a single connectivity channel contains two pieces of IT equipment and may travel through multiple rooms and racks. Equipment includes servers, switches, WAN, SAN, terminal servers, PC's, PBX and phones. All that equipment needs to be documented and managed throughout its life-cycle to provide a total view of the physical infrastructure. Often environmental data is required to provide a complete picture.

Active patching solutions document patches on the active patch panel well. However, away from the active panels, these solutions provide management only through the use of paper work-orders that need printing, execution and then updating at the desktop. This process requires multiple record updates.

Active patch solutions are focused on data connectivity management – which, when we perform surveys, is not in the top 10 issues of data center and facility managers.

Intelligent patch panels? Are they really “intelligent”? When you think about it, while active panels are often referred to as “intelligent,” the intelligence is in the software, just like Cormant-CS

Consider the difference with Cormant-CS

Cormant-CS captures full information about the entire channel of connectivity including the infrastructure and assets that are part of the environment. Cormant-CS presents information on multiple mobile devices that support full creation, read, update and delete functionality. This ensures that any change is immediately recorded by the engineers, allowing precise, holistic management of the infrastructure.

This management of connectivity and connected and non-connected assets means that an up-to-date record of the entire infrastructure is constantly being updated and made available to everyone, all the time. The Cormant-CS handheld displays and updates work-orders, visual floor-plans and, with a simple scan, can display full information about a channel of connectivity, or any asset. Cormant-CS is vendor neutral. You are not tied to one vendor's connectivity infrastructure.

Mobility and barcodes solve connectivity management

Portability ensures all records (connectivity and asset) are updated in 'real time' as changes are made. Both Tablet and off-line handheld computers support barcode (& RFID) scanning of cables, uniquely identifying each cable and patch. The Cormant-CS solutions provide a fully mobile solution using tablets and hand-held computers.

Mobility means data accuracy of Cormant-CS is far higher than competitive systems. Full records that are always up-to-date ensure change planning is based on trusted data. Scanning of cables confirms changes are made and connectivity recorded.

Cost to benefit ratio

Looking at the cost to benefit ratio of each system is important in understanding what the implementation cost to performance provides or Bang for the buck. It is true, the investment in structured cabling is high; however, it is a very small proportion of the overall cost of a new data center or office campus. Cormant-CS can maximize the use of the entire infrastructure; realizing a savings that can be millions of dollars per annum. The cost of Cormant-CS is typically 0.01% of the cost of a data center or campus.

On the contrary, when analyzing the benefit of active patch monitoring, it does not address wasted of assets, power or environmental data, rack management and holistic reporting. Focusing on just structured cabling limits the potential savings to just a percentage of the cost of the structured cabling. The cost of active solutions can be 20 – 35% of the cost of the structured cabling system.

Efficient, accurate planning and execution of MACs in physical IT infrastructure

The combination of the client/server/web & handheld of Cormant-CS ensures maximum efficiency when making connectivity and infrastructure changes especially at the work area. All changes are made once and immediately documented on the handheld ensuring maximum confidence in data. Confidence in data means confidence when planning further changes, which ensure speed and efficiency.

Planning changes at the active panel is inefficient. Double work is often required to complete a change cycle away from the active panel as paper records need to be used and updates can easily be forgotten leading to inaccurate database information, especially at the work-area. This leads to slower future changes as lack of confidence in data means audits and checking often takes place before future changes are made.

Cabling independence to meet today's and tomorrow's needs

Cormant-CS is totally independent of any cabling vendor, so it can document any brand of cabling and any type of connectivity (including non-structured cabling, such as electrical connectivity). While Cormant-CS is vendor neutral Belden ensure that all of their parts are fully ready to be used with Cormant-CS with templates, appropriate attributes and, as required, pre-barcoded connectivity and cable components.

Active patching locks a customer into one vendor for panels and the special patch cords. There is limited ability to change cabling vendors or mix and match vendors when acquisitions of companies using disparate systems occur. Purchasing and stocking a supply of specific patch cord for replacement of defective ones may become a problem after few years as technology changes and consolidation of vendors occur.

One system, all Physical IT infrastructure documentation

Cormant-CS provides a single solution for the entire physical infrastructure. No additional asset management system required. Often with active patching solutions an additional asset recording and management tool is required, thus increasing costs and creating another data entry point. This can also be considered another point of failure to provide accurate data.

Integration

Cormant-CS can exchange data with other systems and hardware. The Cormant-CS Web services XML API and SNMP/WMI/XML/CLI scripting engine come as part of the core product they are not additional cost items. With the built-in scripting engine c# and vb.net scripts can be written to extend Cormant-CS functionality as well as interact with the network devices and services within the environment.

Most Active patching systems are limited to SNMP and WMI querying of external devices. Many systems require an additional fee for API and interface modules.

No additional hardware, no power used

Because Cormant-CS is software and mobile based, there is no additional planning required to deploy as compared to active patch solutions that use valuable rack space, power and data connectivity. Cormant-CS does not negatively impact the environmental aspects of a data center.

Active patching uses valuable rack space, power and connectivity. Because physical, active items are deployed in the data center they must be managed to maintain uptime, thereby adding to an already challenging management task. Simply put, it is another set of hardware to maintain and manage

Implementation and roll-out

Implementation of Cormant-CS requires no downtime for existing sites. It works well for new, existing or retrofit projects. The software can even be installed to a virtual machine to speed up the roll out of the system. It is always easier, faster and more manageable implementing Cormant-CS compared to active hardware solutions. Active patching solutions are rarely implemented in existing infrastructure unless a complete replacement of existing panels is needed. Typically, intelligent solutions are for new sites and take longer to roll out.

Managing the real problems

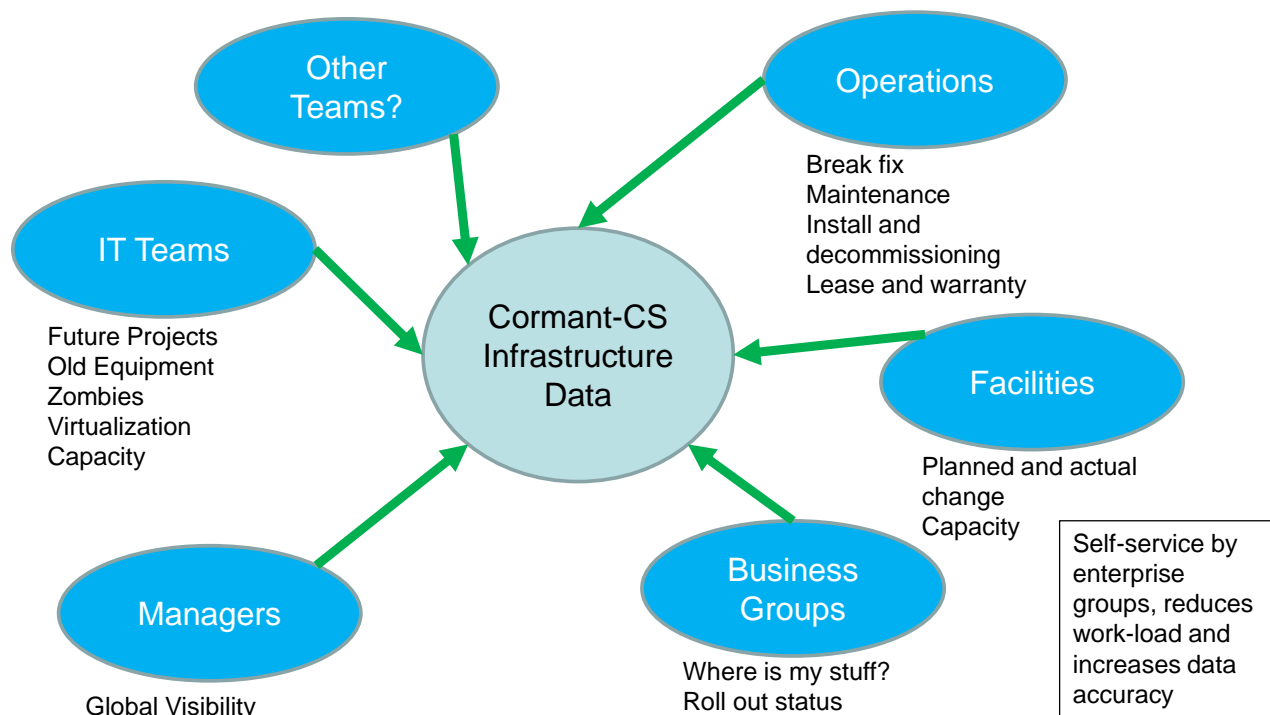
Cormant-CS is able to manage just what the users want, both in the data center and beyond. Cormant-CS customers use it to manage assets as much as it is to manage connectivity. Because Cormant-CS users update all of the records all of the time, the data is trusted when additional change is planned.

Active patch solutions 'force' users to manage patching, even if this is not actually where most management is needed. Cormant-CS also manages power, heat, RU space, inventory, etc. Active patching does not.

Away from the patch panel any changes have to be recorded on paper and updated later. This often does not happen leading to out of date, untrusted records that then need to be checked before planning additional change.

Single Repository of Data Eliminates Spreadsheet Misery

Cormant-CS provides a consolidated solution to spreadsheet misery because all data is stored in a single database. The consolidated data becomes a shared resource with groups using Cormant-CS to get their own answers saving valuable time. Self-service by enterprise groups reduces work-load and increase data accuracy.



With Active patching system users, spreadsheets are usually still kept for non-connectivity data. With a mix of spreadsheets and data in the active patching solution no single view of the environment exists. No shared data source so queries from other groups need to be manually answered

Summary

The Cormant-CS philosophy is portability, practicality and usability. Cormant-CS provides a holistic approach to management of the data center assets, power, connectivity and space which in turn, allows Data Center managers to navigate complexity while reducing risk. Lastly, Cormant-CS can increase

productivity and asset utilization by between 20 and 50%. Break free from limited solutions and vendor lock in, explore your entire infrastructure with Cormant-CS Infrastructure Management.

The Belden-Cormant-CS partnership ensures that not only is the customer purchasing world-class infrastructure components from Belden, they are receiving full inventory and connectivity and infrastructure management (DCIM) as part of a turn-key delivery. Belden ensure that all documentation will be delivered turn-key as part of the Cormant-CS solution providing value-added delivery. By delivering Cormant-CS as part of the infrastructure package, Belden ensures that the customer has a long-term solution to manage and maximize their new infrastructure investment that can be extended to current legacy infrastructure, something not possible with active patching.