riverbed®

IN BRIEF

Industry

» Professional Services

Challenges

» Inability to quickly troubleshoot performance problems

» Difficulty managing link usage and application response

» Too much finger pointing, difficulty prioritizing problem response

Solution

» An AppResponse Xpert Appliance deployed in the New York data center

» Monitors performance and utilization for all critical applications and links

» Real-time and historical views of a wide range of application and network metrics

Benefits

» Much faster problem localization and resolution across global network

» Real-time and historical overview of critical replication links

» No more finger pointing, higher IS productivity

» Better bandwidth management

» Very fast time to value

Choice Logistics

Inventory Management Worldwide

Choice Logistics is a leading provider of outsourced logistics and integrated inventory management solutions, managing over $500 million in inventories worldwide. With over 310 strategic stocking locations (SSLs) in 37 countries, Choice's comprehensive network of secured sites provides local inventory management and expedited delivery services 24x7x365 for direct deployment of mission-critical parts. The company's ISO-certified processes are relied on by leading high-tech companies, including ADIC, Avaya, Cisco, EMC, Equant, Hitachi Data Systems, McData and others.

Choice Logistic's main data center is in New York, linked via MPLS to a disaster recovery site in New Jersey. The company's domestic distribution centers are also linked to HQ via MPLS, while many other operations, including communications with parts distribution partners worldwide and client access to status reports and other information, are supported via Citrix over the Internet.

Challenge: Safety and User Satisfaction

The top priorities for Choice Logistic's IS department are the safety of the data representing the movement of millions of parts worldwide for hundreds of clients, and user satisfaction with the response of core applications. But their existing tools gave them mostly an "after-the-fact" view of network and application performance, which left the IS department always running to catch up with the expanding needs of the business. The reports they got from their carrier could tell them how much bandwidth they were using, but not which applications or users were involved. And, they had to deal with a lot of "finger pointing " between server, application, and network teams, since there was no one tool that could quickly distinguish the actual source of problems.

"The 'it's not the network' tagline really caught my eye," says Domenick Gandolfo, network engineer at Choice Logistics. "I kept hearing 'the network is slow' from everyone, and it took us way too long to prove it wasn't, or track down the problem when it was and fix it."

Solution:

The company decided to try an Riverbed® AppResponse Xpert® Appliance in the main New York data center.

Benefits: Immediate Relief

"I was surprised at how fast the setup went," says Domenick. "Even more surprising was the fact that the box helped us diagnose a major problem within a day or two of installation: a failed SAN switch at the disaster recovery center, causing a failover that saturated a secondary fiber port. We were able to diagnose and fix the problem—and make sure that the failover wouldn't cause the same problem in the future— far more quickly than would have been possible before we had the appliance." He adds that "this was the first inkling we had of the fast ROI the box would deliver: less than six months."

> *"I'm sort of a network doctor. I have to interpret the data my tools give me and make a judgment call, sometimes very quickly. The highly accurate diagnostics furnished by the [AppResponse Xpert] box give me confidence that I'm making the right call."*

For Choice Logistics, this first real-world test of the AppResponse Xpert appliance demonstrated its usefulness for one of the main tasks it's charged with: optimizing the WAN traffic between New York and the replication servers in the New Jersey disaster recovery center. "The real-time data it supplies lets us respond quickly to problems," says Domenick, "while the historical views enable us to optimize backup and replication scheduling to make sure we don't saturate the links or degrade the user experience."

He also notes that the ability of the AppResponse Xpert appliance to organize traffic in terms of Business Groups (logical sets of IP addresses that represent key resource and user communities) and Applications makes it easy to monitor application response and troubleshoot problems in real time. "Because we know at a glance which application, which servers, and which users are involved, no matter where in the world the users are, our priorities are always clear, which enables the IS department to deliver even more value to the organization."

Drilling Down and Cleaning Up

The carrier reports are far more useful to Choice Logistics when analyzed using the AppResponse Xpert appliance. "We can drill down into the spikes in traffic and identify not only the application, but the specific users and where they're connecting," says Domenick. "It's a lot less confrontational just to be able to show a department manager a report on bandwidth abuse." He also notes that the same ability to clearly demonstrate the source of a problem has eliminated finger-pointing. "We can all see what the issue is and spend our time fixing it, rather than arguing over who's responsible. And the Insights make this even easier." (Insights[a] are point-and-click action guides that encapsulate best-practice workflows for accomplishing a wide range of management tasks.) Domenick also uses the appliance's packet-capture capability for deep protocol analysis using Ethereal, which further extends his diagnostic abilities.

Why Choose AppResponse Xpert?

Asked how he'd describe AppResponse Xpert to a network engineer like himself, Domenick says, "I'm sort of a network doctor. I have to interpret the data my tools give me and make a judgment call, sometimes very quickly. The highly accurate diagnostics furnished by the [AppResponse Xpert] appliance give me confidence that I'm making the right call."

InfoWorld 2011 TECHNOLOGY OF THE YEAR AWARDS

2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011

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GCN LAB PRODUCTS OF THE YEAR

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