CASCADES SIMPLIFIES PAPERWORK WITH WHATSUP GOLD

Case study

Company:
Cascades Tissue Group

Industry:
Paper Products

Business challenge:
Cascades needed a way to monitor bandwidth and devices and to validate data collected across multiple sites throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Outcome:
Cascades chose WhatsUp Gold to create customized views of paper mills and warehouses and to monitor unique devices, including bar code readers.

Cascades Tissue Group is a major producer of facial tissue, napkins, bathroom tissue and paper towels, with mills located throughout Canada and the United States. Cascades needed the ability to not only monitor sites with uniformity and clarity, but also to be able to collect data and analyze it at the home office in Montréal. They also didn't have a way to monitor the health of their North American WAN. In the Fall of 2006, when Cascades was preparing to implement a large IT project that would allow them to better understand network usage, they began to examine the network monitoring tools available to them.

"We needed to know what the usage would be after we connected disparate servers around the country to the main office servers," says Dany Briard, IT Implementation & Operations Coordinator. "We also needed something to monitor the bandwidth during the implementation so we could take action if something happened.

"Before choosing WhatsUp Gold we had experimented with very limited usage of a free product that gave us 24 hours worth of reporting. We looked at products from SolarWinds, the EMC Smarts line of products, other OSI network monitors and WhatsUp Gold. The considerations were start and stop services, level of functionality, whether or not there was a local distributor, cost, and help with integration. That's when we found Intrasoft in Montréal."

Intrasoft Solutions has been a VAR and integrator of Ipswitch solutions since 1997 when they became the first Canadian Premier Partner. "Cascades downloaded the evaluation version of WhatsUp Gold and we were notified," says Stephan Chayer, President of Intrasoft. "We sent an email letting them know we were their Canadian VAR. After that, it didn't take long for them to get back to us with questions about Novell severs, memory, disk space, etcetera. Implementing 20 sites with over 500 devices was challenging, but our team rose to the occasion. We even held onsite training at the end of the engagement."

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>
> —Dany Briard
> IT Implementation &
> Operations Coordinator,
> Cascades Tissue Group

"Intrasoft helped us a lot," adds Briard. "Having a local partner that spoke our language and could implement the solution we needed was a key driver in choosing Intrasoft. They were able to do a full integration for all the mills. We gave them a spreadsheet and they created all the views and added all the devices. Once a week we would review what was needed and the integration was completed for 20 sites across the U.S. and Canada. All the IT managers, data collection specialists, data warehouse specialists, and EDI managers are included, and all told about 50 end users receive information from WhatsUp Gold. When something went wrong previously, the proper people were notified days later. Today – depending on the level of the problem – it takes much less time for notification."

Cascades uses EDI communications to provide important documentation to trucks crossing back and forth between the U.S. and Canada. "We're working with a partner to coordinate paperwork for customs as trucks move across the border," says Briard. "We offered to monitor devices on their network to tell them if their interfaces and services were up because they're using SolarWinds, and SolarWinds can't do that. There's a few thousand dollars penalty each time they arrive at the border without the proper paperwork."

WhatsUp Gold's ability to show real-time interface utilization as well as utilization over time also gives Cascades the ability to customize interface speeds. Additionally, the MAC Address finder maps MAC addresses to IP addresses and shows connectivity between a particular switch's ports and devices. "When we had a Citrix problem in New York we were able to see the bandwidth usage and discover which interface on the device was going bad," says Briard. "Not only can you monitor devices but interfaces on those devices. It's the same thing on our VPN with routers in Toronto. They VPN into our WAN and even then we were able to discover the interface."

Because Cascades also needed network management software that could help them discover trends in data they were collecting, WhatsUp Gold was an easy decision. From the Application Monitoring Templates for Microsoft® SQL Server to the dynamic groups that can be created to track devices based on configurable criteria, WhatsUp Gold makes it simple. "It's great to be able to derive information from a Microsoft® SQL server from three months ago or a year ago," says Briard. "What's really nice is to be able to have the network specialists look at not only the data collector server in the mill on a device but on only the one that they need. We have a team of network specialists at the home office and those two teams are looking at the same equipment but each have specialized views for their team. We already have achieved our ROI in WhatsUp Gold in less than six months."

Briard notes they are using the WMI for Application Monitoring feature as well as the improved polling features, but says the reports are particularly helpful. "All the reports are great – there's a great deal of flexibility there," he says. "Scaling the time to get information in SQL is very important for us. In the future, we'll know the downtime of the paper machine. Sometimes we have to stop and start a service and we do that directly from the WhatsUp console."

As business grows, Briard is confident that WhatsUp Gold will scale to fit his environment. "We are always in expansion mode," he says. "As we centralize IT more and more, we're looking for WhatsUp Gold to provide more services and help advise the resources in the mill to put in place the right actions. From what we've seen, WhatsUp Gold will remain our product of choice."

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