

Customer Success Story: Network Plus

The Customer

Network Plus presented ACE*COMM with an interesting challenge, beginning with the collection and processing of usage records from a number of different switches using a variety of protocols and multiple formats. Network Plus operates Nortel DMS 250 switches in Illinois and Florida, Nortel combination DMS 250 / DMS 300 switches in New England and the west coast, as well as Lucent 5ESS switches in New York, Massachusetts, and Florida. They offer local, long distance, and international voice service for both retail and wholesale customers. More switches are planned in the coming year, in several other markets. To meet the challenge, ACE*COMM implemented N*VISION®, a Convergent Mediation™ solution which includes a specialized network-usage data warehouse

The Challenge

The initial challenge was the collection, normalization and organization of the customer's network usage for local, long-distance and international service from a multi-vendor network environment. The goal was to achieve a consistent view of the data. The second challenge was to organize the data received from the network and from their partners into a specialized network-usage data warehouse that would become the central repository of all usage information. This would be used to feed the billing process but also to support strategic business analysis. In other words, the full challenge was to find a solution that met the operational need of billing for all usage while supporting other business requirements such as marketing analysis and planning.

The Solution

ACE*COMM proposed and implemented N*VISION®, a Convergent Mediation™ solution which includes a specialized network usage data warehouse. Convergent Mediation™ facilitates the normalization and correlation of billing data collected from the customer's local, long distance and international switches, as well as data received from their partners, to create a generic perspective of each call that is routed on the network. It enables Network Plus to trace, extract, and analyze call detail records in near real time, increasing the efficiency of network troubleshooting.

The first big hurdle was to get the system up and running as quickly as possible in order to immediately achieve some benefits. We were able to implement a functioning and successful first phase in about six weeks, which translated into immediate significant financial benefits to Network Plus. The Convergent Mediation™ solution not only normalizes the different switch and partner data, it also separates the network usage into various categories which it feeds to the appropriate system--CABS, billing, fraud (etc.)--in the format expected by Network Plus's existing systems. This has allowed them to maximize their return on existing investments while increasing their flexibility in implementing new services and new network technologies.

One of the immediate benefits realized by Network Plus was derived from the proper identification and billing of Carrier Access usage. Prior to the installation of our Convergent Mediation™ system, Network Plus was unable to properly capture and analyze CABS billing data, because the complexity of their network architecture made it difficult to properly identify CABS-oriented records. Implementing N*VISION® netted an additional \$250,000 in the first month of operation. Today, the monthly contribution directly attributed to their Convergent Mediation™ system is several times what it was for that first month.

With the second phase of the project now in production, Network Plus intends to use the knowledge obtained from the N*VISION® system for marketing and customer care purposes. The system's data augmentation and statistical analysis abilities allows them to analyze their customers' usage patterns, giving them insight into the type of offerings that would best suit their individual needs.

The final phase of implementation, which is now underway, will add a wholesale rating module and additional reporting and analysis capabilities. When completed, it will enable Network Plus to analyze the traffic carried on their network along multiple dimensions for both engineering and business related decisions.

Key Benefits

Network Plus chose ACE*COMM's Convergent Mediation™ and N*VISION® after reviewing all the options available on the market. They had previously worked with two other vendors for close to a year to try to accomplish their goal--collect, identify, validate and reformat data from a variety of switch vendors and types, sort the data, and send only appropriate (and standardized) data to their various billing systems. After such an ordeal, they were very pleased that ACE*COMM was able to implement Phase 1 of the system in only six weeks. "ACE*COMM was the only company that could deliver a consistent perspective of our entire network for local, long-distance and international traffic," said Joe Larizza, CIO and executive vice president of Operations at Network Plus. "Their solution has allowed us to meet our corporate goals in terms of providing essential information on the performance of our network." Additionally, with a revenue boost of hundreds of thousands of dollars per month, the system has paid for itself many times over.