

Juniper Networks DX 3650 Appliance Helps Global Consulting Firm Achieve Successful CRM Deployment

Business:

- Major worldwide business consulting firm

Problem:

- Deployment of new CRM application led to unacceptably slow performance for remote users, and also slowed access to Microsoft Outlook

Key Benefits:

- Four-fold improvement in application-download times
- No need to buy costly new servers and software licenses for remote offices
- Product can be expanded to speed up company's internal portal

One of the world's leading global business consulting firms decided in mid-2003 to implement new customer relationship management (CRM) software as part of an effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of client development programs. The system provides a vehicle for vice presidents in the company's 26 offices to share contacts and cooperate on programs.

The CRM product was selected by the company's marketing and technology groups. The vendor, a leading provider of CRM products to professional services firms, had a track record of successful deployment across a wide range of North American professional services organizations, such as legal and accounting firms. A new release of the software, which utilized XML, ran into severe performance problems when used in a large, distributed enterprise with thousands of employees dispersed across the globe.

"The application was selected for its rich features and close integration with Microsoft Outlook, but subsequent changes in the product's architecture made performance on slower global networks unacceptable," said the company's network manager. "The application was centralized on a server at our headquarters. Users in that office had no access problems at all. But users at every other location had to access the application through VPN tunnels to headquarters. Typical latency between offices is at 150-200 milliseconds, which normally is decent performance; but for this CRM application, anything over 70 milliseconds created a huge performance problem. It was taking up to 27 seconds to download a single contact record at a remote office."

He and his team thought they had a choice of either purchasing new servers and separate versions of the CRM application for every remote office – which would have been cost-prohibitive – or working with the CRM vendor to improve the application's performance for remote locations.

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Network Manager |

Then in November 2003, another possibility came to light. The network manager heard from Innovative Information Solutions, a systems integrator based in Waterbury, Conn., about the Juniper Networks DX™ 3650 application acceleration platform. The DX 3650 platform provides a comprehensive set of key features aimed at the Web tier portion of the enterprise data center. Server load balancing, compression, connection management, secure sockets layer (SSL) processing, request buffering, adaptive content processing and more are all available on a single DX platform.

In mid-December the consulting firm installed the DX 3650 appliance at its headquarters location, where it sits between the company's firewall and its servers (a dedicated CRM server and two SQL servers). A West Coast user wanting to access the CRM application, for example, would send his request from that office's layer 3 switch to a local VPN device across the country, to a headquarters VPN device, and then to the Juniper Networks unit.

Users at remote offices immediately saw an almost four-fold performance improvement, with contact page downloads reduced to about seven seconds. "Juniper Networks took an application that was designed to run locally, and made it act as if it were running locally at every one of our offices around the world," said the network manager. Access times should

come down even further when his team implements another key feature of the DX 3650 platform: the Juniper Networks OverDrive™ environment, which gives enterprise data centers the ability to custom-tailor the behavior of Web-enabled applications by writing simple rules that process application content.

The network manager said the Juniper Networks DX 3650 unit has also improved the usability of his firm's Microsoft Outlook software, whose performance at the remote offices had also been significantly affected by the high-latency CRM application. Because of a synchronization set up between the two applications so they could share contact information, Outlook access slowed down whenever it tried to "talk" to the CRM database to get an update. Since e-mail and voice mail are critical applications for the company's consultants, the slowdown was unacceptable.

The DX 3650 appliance will soon be put into action on the company's internal portal as well. Based on Microsoft's SharePoint portal application, the portal provides search capabilities across the company's global network, allowing users to look for items ranging from holiday dates to available printers to customer projects. Up to now, the portal's performance at remote offices has been "slow, but survivable," the network manager said. "We look forward to seeing it get a lot better soon."



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