

SDS USA Case Study:

Major Data Management Service Provider

The service provider industry has become one of the hottest segments of the economy. Encouraged by management gurus to focus their resources on their core competencies, companies increasingly are turning to service providers to take on wide range of functions, including data management. With business increasingly data driven at every level, from executives to line-of-business managers to rank-and-file information workers, the data management services this international service provider offers have become critically important. These services revolve around the ability to develop and deliver data management capabilities ranging from customer data integration to data services to a wide range of data analytics. Clients typically access their data and these services, which run on the service provider's mainframe, over the IP network.

Problem: Ensuring 24x7 network availability

The data management service provider's revenue stream depends on providing customers with reliable access to their data over the IP network any time. It wasn't enough that the data was residing securely on the service provider's multiple z9 complex. A key reason for going with a service provider is 24x7 access and bullet-proof dependability. A service provider's network just has to be up.

To deliver high network availability and dependability to its customers, thereby ensuring its own revenue stream, the service provider's small staff of network administrators continuously monitors IP traffic and critical interfaces. "There are always crisis situations that require us to troubleshoot the problem fast," says the senior network administrator.

Solution: SDS VitalSigns for IP and VTAM on z/OS

With so much riding on network availability, the service provider turned to VitalSigns for IP, a GUI-based network management tool for z/OS from Software Diversified Services (SDS) USA. In addition, the company adopted SDS's Vital Signs for VTAM (VSV) to manage its VTAM networks, looking specifically at traffic, response time, and resource usage for lines, controllers, applications terminals, and gateways. "VIP and VSV let us find and fix problems fast," the administrator notes.

Prior to deploying the SDS tools, the administrators had to manually troubleshoot any problems. "This was very slow and cumbersome," says the administrator. The administrators would have to turn on a trace, perform a dump, and go through the data line by line. "The VIP trace function is very helpful. We use it two or three times each month for one particularly critical application. It lets us catch problems fast," she adds.

The service provider runs the VIP server on a z9 mainframe under the Unix System Services (USS) element of z/OS, which is tightly integrated into the mainframe operating system. Agents are installed on each z9 LPAR while administrators access the system via their browser.

Results: Identify and resolve problems fast

"The big benefit is that we can see exactly what is going on. Now we can quickly get a good picture of the entire network. With one glance we can see what's up," says the administrator. They are able to proactively identify and resolve issues before they turn into problems that impact customers. The customers don't even realize there was a problem.

In addition to speeding up the network troubleshooting, VIP and VSV increase administrator productivity and efficiency by eliminating the need to manually trace problems. As a result a very small team of administrators can maintain a large, busy network.

Finally, the administrators can use SDS' reporting capabilities, which let them improve customer service. Often, for example, a customer will request a report on FTP activity. With the reporting provided by the SDS tools, this is an easy request to satisfy.

Recently the service provider upgraded to VIP 5.0. "It has expanded reporting functions and things like dynamic graphics, but what we liked immediately about version 5.0 was the enhanced logging capabilities," says the administrator.

The surge in IP traffic over the past few years combined with the emergence of IP-based service providers has propelled IP to the forefront as a primary data center communications protocol. Even the most dedicated mainframe shops no longer rely on SNA alone. Mainframe shops of all types need to monitor and manage today's multi-protocol network environments if they expect to achieve and maintain the kind of network performance that keeps their people productive and their customers satisfied. Tools like SDS VIP and VSV make this easy to do.

For more information about VIP
see <http://www.sdsusa.com/vip>
write to sales@sdsusa.com
phone 763-571-9000