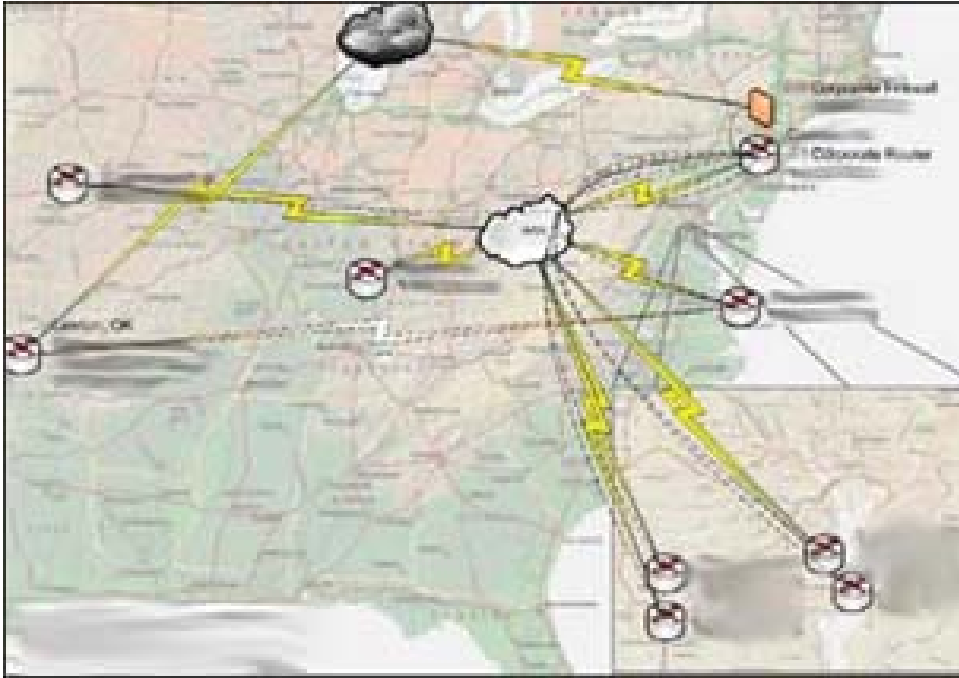# NORTEC®

Signature Companies kicks off relationship with Nortec's Network Status Report

Network Status Report (NSR) Helps Signature Boost Infrastructure Performance and Proactively Plan for the Future

Background

Signature has multiple facilities, with functions that span four states. Its employees are highly mobile, often working from new homes in remote locations. Corporate communications were starting to become somewhat unreliable, so the network systems team decided it was time to investigate how to best handle infrastructure troubleshooting, performance monitoring, and maintenance. Around the same time, a representative from Nortec, the company's network systems integrator, paid a visit.

"Nortec helps us with upgrades and problems ongoing, and they're a great resource whenever something new comes out," said John Robinson, Network Systems Manager for Signature. "Nortec has always been super responsive—when we call them, it takes no longer than an hour to get a response. They're amazing."

Background

"We'd been having all kinds of little troubles, and one major dilemma we face is the large footprint of our company," said Tim Cullen, Network Systems Operator for Signature. "We were watching our servers for problems, and at the time a Nortec representative came out to speak about another service Nortec offered. He mentioned Nortec's Network Status Report (NSR) service."

NSR Structure

Executive Summary
A high-level overview that rates each each aspect of a system from excellent-to-poor versus stated compliance requirements and/or industry standards.

Remediation
A detailed breakdown for each aspect and issue, recommended remediation procedures, including timeline and sequence. This section is often used to create or support a company's IT roadmap.

Reference
Includes architectural diagramns, granular logged information from the reports, including a detailed inventory of network devices, raw report data indexed in both print and CD format for reference, reporting and archival purposes.

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-John Robinson, Network Systems Manager - Signature Companies, Inc.

Solution

NSR is a scalable service that combines network consulting and system document-ation to meet corporate network planning, operations, management and compliance requirements. Nortec's NSR takes a point-in-time snapshot of a network and analyzes and reviews the data, comparing it to accepted industry standards or corporate-specified compliance requirements.

"When we heard about what NSR did and saw a demo, we said 'This is incredible, we need to run this on our systems,'" said Cullen. "We had never heard of a service like it and we immediately signed up. NSR allows us to look at just about everything having to do with our network and helps determine what resources we need and what upgrades should be made. It showed us in-depth how our interoffice communications were being handled in terms of what was getting through and what wasn't, and helped pinpoint how we could fine-tune it to run more efficiently."

Process

Nortec's NSR process begins with an interview session to set and communicate goals and expectations. This meeting is followed up by data collection, analysis and reporting, and concludes with a presentation of the deliverables to management and IT personnel.

"A Nortec representative spent a day visiting our locations, running diagnostics on a laptop," said Robinson. "They looked closely at the networking devices, servers and other equipment and spent an entire day gathering in-depth information. That was all we needed to help us enrich our network sufficiently.

NSR Process

Data Collection
Following a scope defining interview session, the Data Collection phase is kicked off. Using a toolset developed and progressed over 10 years, the NSR engineer will work inside and outside of your system collecting information for the report.

Write Up
Information is reviewed, assessed, and organized into the NSR structure. Subject matter experts that cover each aspect of an infrastructure compile reports and make recommendations how to remediate or progress each aspect of your system.

Presentation
The final document is meticulously presented to appropriate stakeholders at your organization. The presentation covers the executive summary first, and proceeds into the latter stages with technical personnel to ensure comprehension and clarity.

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Before the NSR interview, we'd been contemplating new network connections and the process confirmed that need for us. After we've made some of those changes, we'll likely engage with Nortec for another NSR session to gauge how far we've come and where we can go from there."

Nortec Communications evaluated Signature's system configuration (network infra-structure, connectivity, security and servers) and found issues that were causing bottlenecks—insufficient network connections, for instance. A network security evaluation was also performed to determine if the organization had specific vulner-abilities to be concerned about, and server configurations (disks, drives, memory and CPU) were monitored and analyzed.

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Benefits

Performance Impediments Averted
Signature recognized that memory needed to be added to all of its servers, and also that the operating system had to be upgraded on each server. "When we saw the NSR document, we noticed our servers didn't have the memory they needed, which in turn slowed other resources down," said Cullen. "With that information, we put more memory into each server and immediately got faster responses."

Proactive Changes Planned and Implemented
Nortec's NSR also documented and confirmed Signature's suspicion that its network address naming scheme needed to be re-done. "We had a feeling that the network addressing scheme we were using wasn't going to work for much longer, and Nortec's NSR confirmed that—Nortec will definitely be engaged to help us with that," said Cullen. "At the same time, we made proactive plans that in the future when we change network connections, we'll do a mesh using site-to-site VPNs between our four locations."

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Application Performance Boosted
Signature utilizes typical business applications, such as accounting, word processing, etc. In addition, its most-utilized application is a proprietary software package for managing workflow, from product order placement and processing to delivery and installation.

"Our workflow application needs to run without delay from anywhere an employee is—from their office or from an empty house," said Robinson. "They log into a server to run the application and network performance cannot be a hindrance or it affects the service level we deliver to our customers. Nortec's NSR showed us how to maximize our infrastructure so that customer satisfaction would never be negatively affected."

Partnership Forged
Signature came across Nortec's NSR service at the perfect time—they knew they had some issues with their network, and NSR confirmed those suspicions but also found other ways in which improvements could be made. "Nortec has always come up with answers very quickly for us, and they're always the right answers," said Cullen. "We see improvements already from the NSR process, and we haven't even started the network address re-naming scheme project."

Robinson also notes, "We appreciate our relationship with Nortec and appreciate how fast and accurate they are when they respond to our inquiries. They will be an important part of our company from now on."

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