

Vanheede Environment Group WAN Optimisation

Breaking out of the 'black box' to transparency and control

Is WAN optimisation suitable for small and medium-sized companies? Absolutely, if you look at the case of the Vanheede Environment Group. When users complained about slowness, the company upgraded bandwidth. But that didn't solve the problem. What the company needed was transparency - to understand what was happening in the network - and control - to improve performance. Following a WAN assessment and proof of concept (POC), the group has now fully installed Ipanema.



Olivier Knockaert, ICT Manager, Vanheede

CHALLENGES

A growing need for speed

Growing fast over five years – from 150 to 400 employees – Vanheede decided to centralise its ICT using Citrix. With logistics, environmental services and treatment sites spread out across Belgium and Nord Pas de Calais, central data management provided better security and no local installations or IT staff.

But with Citrix in place, users began to complain about slow network speed. To improve capacity, Vanheede greatly upgraded bandwidth: at the HQ, and at both larger and smaller sites.

Despite these upgrades, speed issues didn't decline. "We realised that we didn't know what was going on in our network: it was a black box", explains Olivier Knockaert. "We decided not to further increase bandwidth, but instead to focus on transparency. We had to find the peaks, the applications using too much bandwidth, etc."

But Olivier wasn't sure if WAN optimisation was suitable for SMEs. The company started with a WAN assessment via BlueCoat Packeteer. "We wondered what would happen with the Citrix traffic", Olivier highlights. "The assessment showed us that Citrix, printing and SMB traffic were the big bandwidth users. This wasn't a surprise, but it was good to see what was happening."

This case-study has been discussed at the BELTUG X-change of 29.10.2009

“You have to treat WAN optimisation like any business case, working together with the business. It’s not only an IT issue: it has a direct impact on business.”



Founded in 1968, Vanheede Environment Group is an independent group specialising in environmental logistics, services and treatment. Its seven operational sites across Belgium and the Nord Pas de Calais of France employ over 400 people. All IT is centralised in Geluwe, Belgium.

Vanheede Environment Group deals with 1100 different waste streams and treats about 500,000 tonnes of waste each year. It has both ISO 9000.2000 (for logistics and treatment) and ISO 14001 certification.

SOLUTIONS

Transparency and control

With that information in hand, Vanheede searched for a solution. “We contacted several providers, but many were not yet prepared to address the SME market”, confirms Olivier. “Two were, so we began our POCs. We were looking for two things: a product that would show us what was happening on the network, and then allow us to prioritise data”.

The first POC was with Citrix WANScaler. “We had high hopes, because it is the only one that can optimise within the Citrix protocol”, Olivier explains. “But it wasn’t stable yet.”

So Vanheede tested Ipanema. What started as a 1 month POC extended to 8 months. The solution gave Vanheede both reporting and monitoring functions: “We could find the cause of a problem, and solve it faster”, insists Olivier. What’s more, Ipanema included voice: a priority for the company.

With the POC phase over, Ipanema has now been fully implemented.

LESSONS LEARNT

Treat it like any business case

Olivier sees that the WAN optimisation market is now moving towards SMEs. But he makes clear that “it isn’t something you just buy and install. You need to work with a partner, but you also need knowledge from both the IT and business sides”.

He recommends that companies first install a reporting layer. “Users say ‘slow system’ but speed is a combination of many elements. You have to know what’s happening in your network!”

Next, he says, set up your priorities: “Treat it like any business case, working together with the business. It’s not only an IT issue: it has a direct impact on business.”