

ACV/CSC: Managed Application Performance

DON'T WAIT TILL YOUR USERS COMPLAIN ABOUT POOR RESPONSE TIME!

When you are responsible for a membership of 1.7 million people, you better make sure that you are running at peak efficiency. And that goes for your systems and applications, too. Through Managed Application Performance, trade union ACV/CSC strives to ensure that it can provide the fast and reliable response times that keep those members happy, across the range of key services it provides.



Johan Vandewalle, CIO / ICT Manager for ACV/CSC, first presented this case at the BELTUG X-Change on WAN, 5 April 2011

CHALLENGES

Ensuring bandwidth efficiency from a growing network

“We have almost as many locations as a bank,” says Johan Vandewalle, CIO / ICT Manager for ACV/CSC. “And we handle a lot of critical applications, like unemployment payments. Originally, our systems were decentralised, but now pretty much everything is centralised. If the applications go down, or we offer poor response time, everyone will come into our 300 regional sites, which means long lines and waits.” For 30 years, AVC/CSC has leased lines from Belgacom, eventually adding the BiLAN network, with standard monitoring. But with the network growing, the organisation needed more, and flexible, bandwidth to keep up its service levels. At the same time, Johan wanted a solution that would include a full service: “It had to be a service that would manage the technology, including all the monitoring and reporting.”

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With its 100 year history, the ACV/CSC is one of Belgium's three recognised trade unions – and the largest. Its organisation includes 240 service centres and 3700 staff, as well as two headquarters. Its 1.7 million members can make use of services including legal assistance, unemployment benefits, training, counselling and administrative assistance for matters related to work, social security, etc.

Belgium trade union affiliation is among the highest in the world: in the private sector, 54 out of every 100 workers are members of a trade union – and half of them are members of the ACV/CSC. More than 80,000 ACV/CSC activists lead the union actions in their company, region or local community.

SOLUTIONS

A complete service for single governance

The solution for ACV/CSC was Explore and Ipanema, offered as a direct service from Belgacom. The Explore VPN network provided the connectivity needed across 280 sites, including central sites, regional offices, remote offices and data centres. “When we need more bandwidth, we can easily compress what we have or add more: we decide together with Belgacom.” And for WAN governance, ACV/CSC chose the Ipanema-based Explore Application Performance Management (APM). “It lets us see what is happening on the network, and pro-actively proceed. We can see the growth of application bandwidth, the use, which apps are using too much bandwidth. Then we can configure our routers, change the configuration, or even change the applications”.

LESSONS LEARNT

Stay on top of your system – and service provider

Johan has some clear advice to pass on to other organisations looking into WAN optimisation. “Once you’ve decided to do it, you have to look into the issue of governance. Be well prepared, and then negotiate for everything as a single service. In fact, don’t talk about the ‘network’ with the provider, talk about the ‘service’. In the end, this will mean whenever you are discussing anything, you only need one meeting, to discuss one governance. And that makes everything easier and more efficient.” He goes on, “But even if you do have the complete service, that doesn’t mean you don’t have to know what’s going on. You still need to understand your own network, applications and categorisations. Knowing it all in advance will prevent you from having to reconfigure the Ipanema boxes. The better prepared you are, the better your results will be.”