FTP Application

This tutorial shows how you can use AppTransaction Xpert to

- Identify the true causes of poor response time
- Document the problems that are found

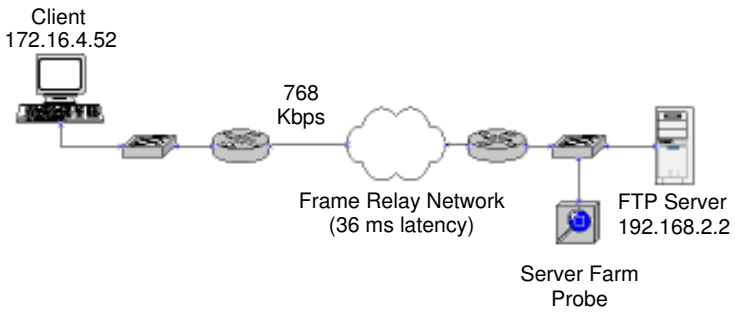
Key Concept—The screen images in this tutorial were captured while running AppTransaction Xpert in Windows with both AppTransaction Xpert Decode Module (ADM) and Wireshark external decoder. If you are working on Linux or if you do not have ADM and/or Wireshark, some screens might look different.

In this tutorial, you will

- Open a packet trace
- Examine the application in the Data Exchange Chart and Treeview
- Examine the protocol decode for a frame
- Examine AppDoctor's Summary of Delays, Diagnosis, and Statistics
- Create graphs of statistics
- Publish results to a web report

The subject application runs on the network topology shown in the following figure. The client connects to the server over a 768 Kbps Frame Relay circuit with 36 ms of latency.

Figure 2-1 Example Network Topology



The subject application (FTP) downloads a 1 MB file in 37 seconds. Normally, the download time for a file this size should be about 11 seconds.

Open the Packet Trace

When using AppTransaction Xpert to solve an application problem, you must accurately characterize the network where the packet trace was captured. The primary information required is the bandwidth and latency between the capture probe and the relevant tier machines. This information allows AppTransaction Xpert to differentiate between delays caused by the network and the servers.

In this case, the packet trace is a single file captured at the FTP server.

Procedure 2-1 Opening a Packet Trace

1 Choose **File > Open Packet Trace(s) > In Transaction Analyzer (Single Capture)…**

➥ The “Open a Capture File” dialog box appears.

2 Add the **FTP_with_loss_server.enc** file:

2.1 Navigate to ***<reldir>*\sys\examples\AppTransaction Xpert\examples** and select **FTP_with_loss_server.enc**.

<reldir> is the release directory where AppTransaction Xpert is installed. In the Windows environment, this is typically C:\Program Files\OPNET\<*release number*>.

2.2 Select the file and click **Open**.

➥ The packet trace opens in the Transaction Analyzer window.

If the **Getting Started Analyzing an Application Transaction** window appears, click Close.

End of Procedure 2-1

Visualize the Application

After opening the packet trace, AppTransaction Xpert shows the Tree View, with information about the TCP connections. We'll come back to the Tree View. But to start, let's go to the Data Exchange Chart (DEC), which depicts the flow of application traffic between tiers.

Procedure 2-2 Viewing the Application

1 Click the Data Exchange Chart tab.

Alternately, click the Data Exchange Chart tool button.

2 If the DEC on your screen does not show 192.168.2.2 (FTP Server) as the top tier, drag the tier label from the bottom to the top.

3 For easy identification, rename the tiers:

3.1 Right-click on the 172.16.4.52 tier label and select **Rename 172.16.4.52**. Then from the submenu, select **Edit…**

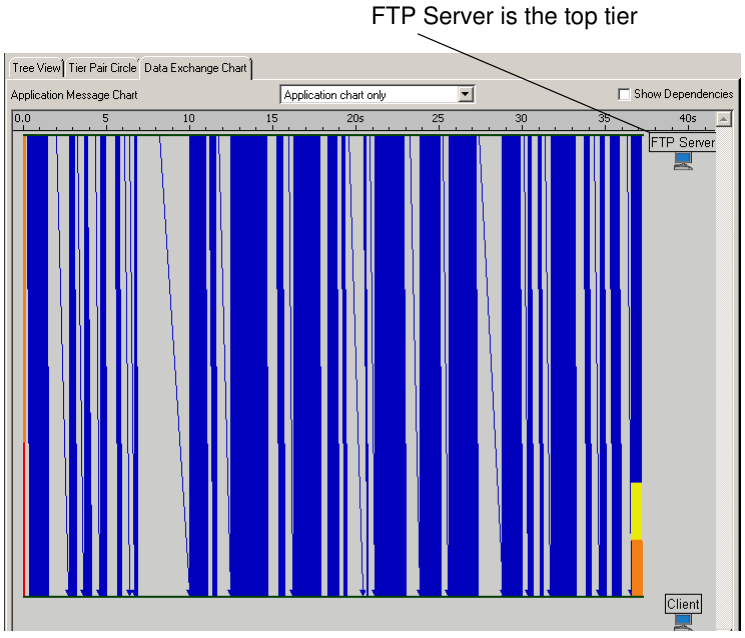
3.2 In the **Rename Tier** dialog box, enter **Client** and click **OK**.

3.3 Right-click on the 192.168.2.2 tier label and select **Rename 192.168.2.2**. Then from the submenu, select **Edit…**

3.4 In the **Rename Tier** dialog box, enter **FTP Server** and click **OK**.

Your screen should match the following figure.

Figure 2-2 Data Exchange Chart (Application View)



The Data Exchange Chart shows the data transferred between tiers on a time line.

The DEC for this FTP download shows that most of the communication between the FTP Server and the Client is composed of messages with application payloads of 1,460 bytes or higher (dark blue messages).

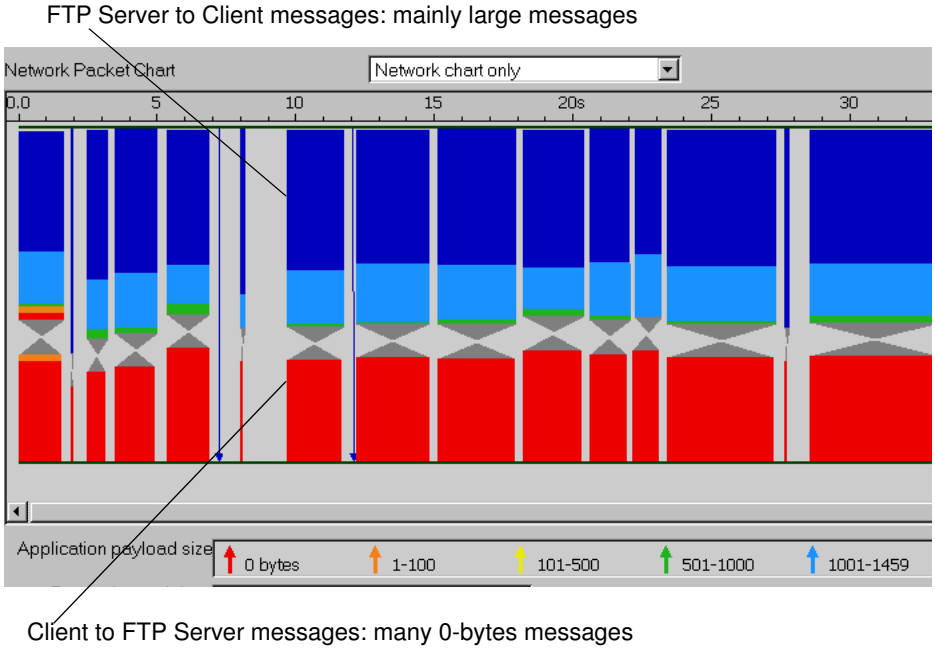
The Data Exchange Chart can display three different views.

- The *Application Chart Only* view is the default. The Application Message Chart shows the flow of application traffic between tiers.
- The *Network Chart Only* view shows the flow of network traffic between tiers, including the effects of network protocols on application traffic. Network protocols split packets into segments, add headers, and often include mechanisms to ensure reliable data transfer. These network protocol effects can influence application behavior.
- The application and network charts view is a combination of the two views described above.

4 Choose **Network Chart Only** from the drop-down menu in the middle of the dialog box.

5 Differentiate the messages flowing in different directions by choosing **View** > **Split Groups**.

Figure 2-3 Data Exchange Chart (Network View)



6 Now the messages are split into two groups and you can see more details:

- The upper-group represents messages from the FTP Server to the Client and the lower-group represents messages from the Client to the FTP Server.
- Mainly large messages (light blue and dark blue) flow from the FTP Server to the Client.

- Zero Byte messages (red) flow from the Client to the FTP Server. Because the red traffic appears only in the Network View, you know that these messages represent some of the protocol effects on this application.

For a better understanding of the traffic, you will zoom in on a transaction. To understand how the Application Chart and Network Chart views differ, you will view both simultaneously.

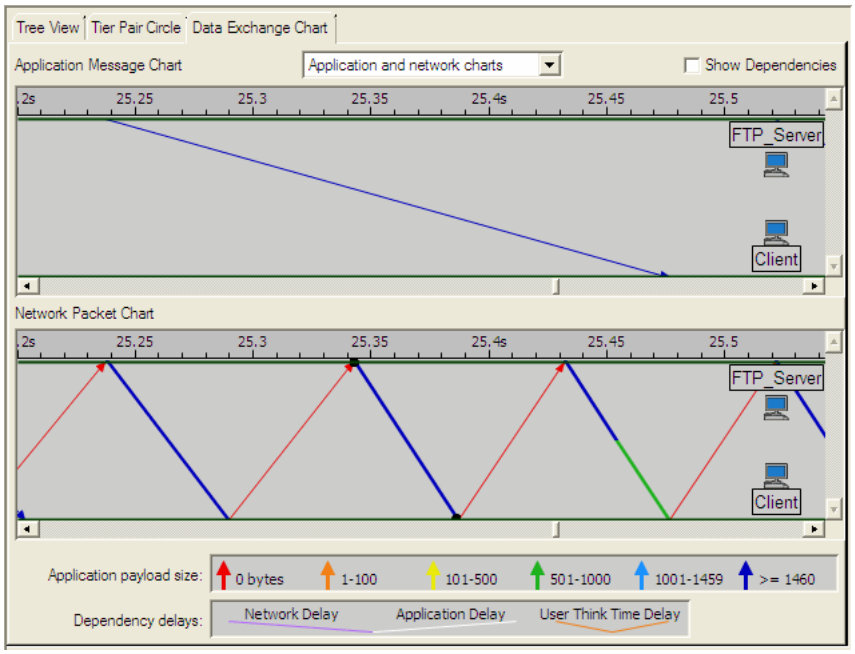
7 Choose **Application and Network Charts** from the drop-down menu in the middle of the dialog box.

8 To disable the split groups view, choose **View** > **Split Groups**.

9 Choose **View** > **Set Visible Time Range**.

10 In the **Specify Time Range** dialog box, set **Start time** to **25.2** and **End time** to **25.5**, then click **OK**.

Figure 2-4 Zoomed View of the Application and Network Charts



11 Notice the differences between the two views:

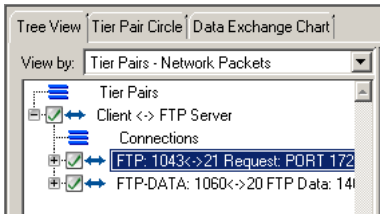
- The Application Chart shows a single 8192-byte message flowing from the FTP Server to the Client. To show the size, place the cursor on the message to show the tooltip. The payload is **8192**.
- The Network Chart shows that this application message causes many packets to flow over the network. These packets are a mix of large (blue and green) packets from the FTP Server to the Client and small (red) packets from the Client to the FTP Server. As the red color indicates, these packets contain 0 bytes of application data. They are the acknowledgements sent by TCP.

Further information about the TCP connections is available in the Tree View. The Tree View provides a text listing and analysis of all of the packets in the original packet trace. Values such as total application Bytes, network traffic, packet send times, and packet size are available. In some cases the Tree View separates traffic into individual transactions.

12 Click on the Tree View tool button.

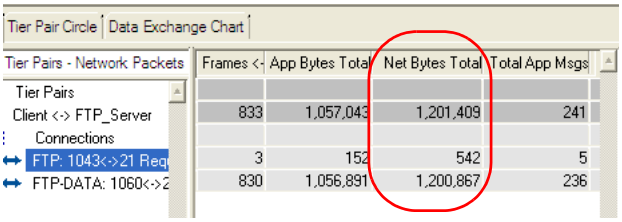
13 Expand the Tier Pairs tree.

Figure 2-5 Tier Pair Expanded



14 Scroll to the right in the middle pane to display the “Net Bytes Total” column.

Figure 2-6 Middle Pane (Partial View of Tree View Dialog Box)

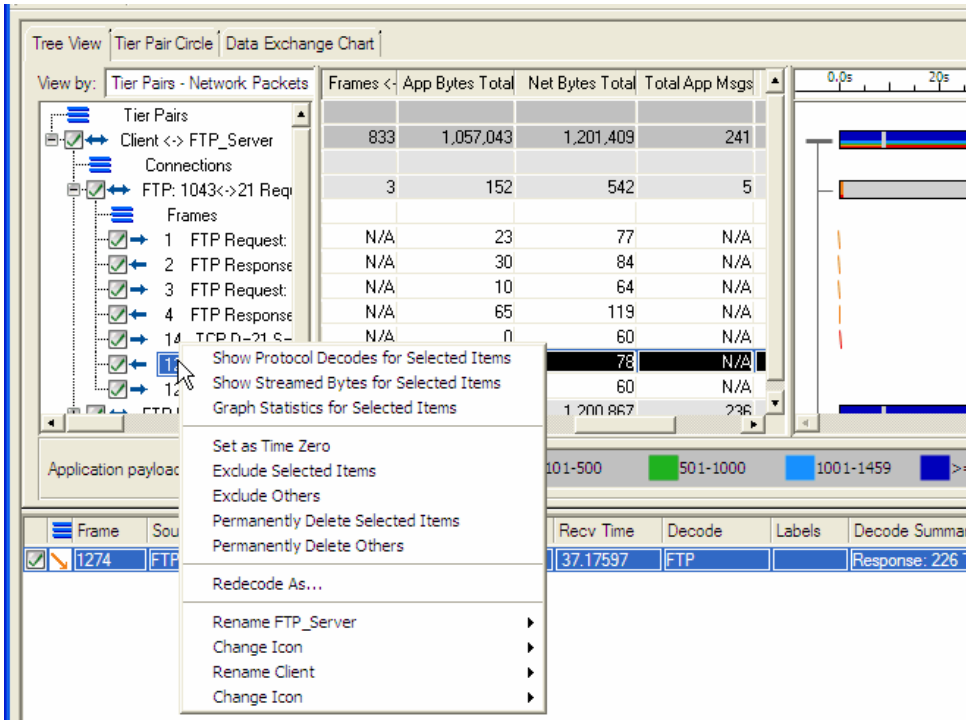


Notice that this application has two distinct TCP connections: one carries 542 bytes; the second carries about 1.2 MB. This behavior is typical of FTP. One connection sends control information (FTP commands); separate connections transfer the actual data files.

15 In the Tier Pairs tree, expand the first connection.

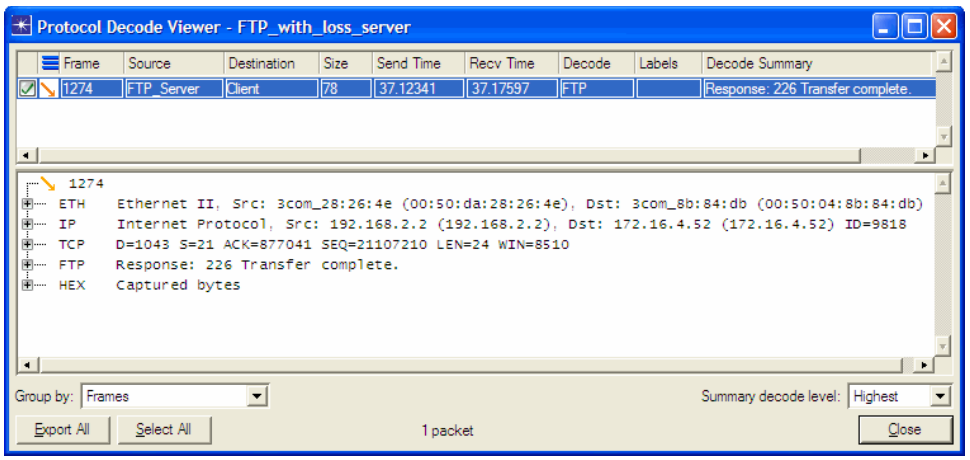
16 Display the decode for Frame 1274 by right-clicking on that transaction and selecting **Show Protocol Decodes For Selected Items**.

Figure 2-7 First TCP Connection Expanded and Pop-up Menu Displayed



➥The Protocol Decode Viewer appears. If you have a license for the AppTransaction Xpert Decode Module (ADM), the decodes will look as follows.

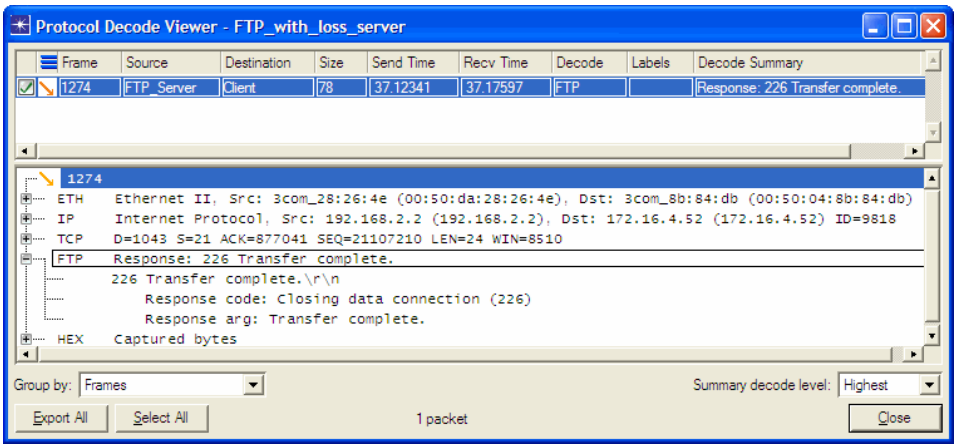
Figure 2-8 Protocol Decode for Frame 1274 (ADM Installed)



17 Notice that the message contains FTP data.

18 If you have Wireshark installed, you can expand the FTP data to see the decoded FTP “transfer complete” message:

Figure 2-9 Expanded Protocol Decode for Frame 1274 (ADM & Wireshark Installed)



19 Close the Protocol Decode Viewer.

End of Procedure 2-2

Analyze with AppDoctor

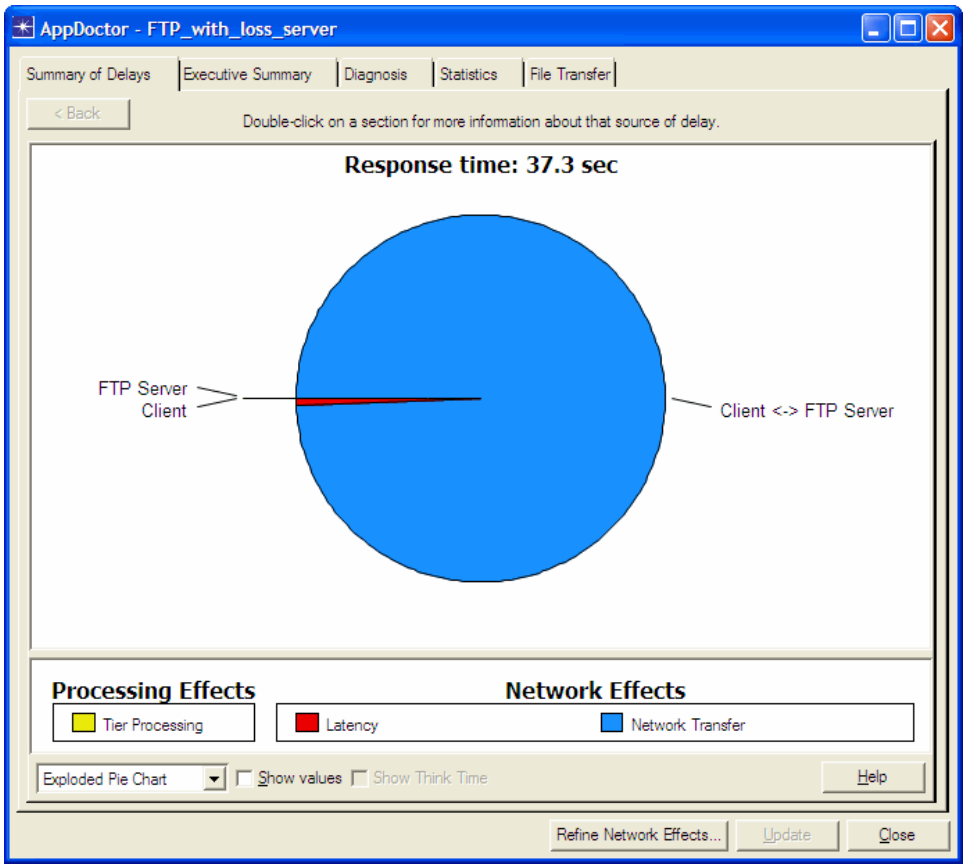
Now that you have become familiar with the traffic between the FTP Server and the Client, you can use AppDoctor to identify the reason for the slow download.

AppDoctor's Summary of Delays provides insight into the root cause of the overall Tier Processing delay. However, before looking at the AppDoctor results, we must refine the network effects (bandwidth and latency) for an accurate analysis.

Procedure 2-3 Analyzing with AppDoctor

1 Choose **AppDoctor > Summary of Delays**.

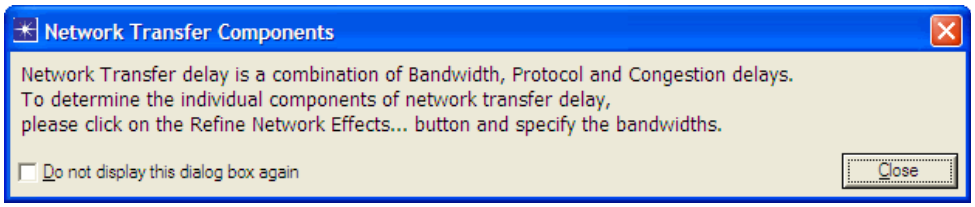
➥ The AppDoctor Summary of Delays window appears.



Note that the analysis shows that the majority of the delay is due to Network Transfer.

2 Double-click on the **Network Transfer** (blue) area of the pie for more information about this source of delay.

➥ The following message box appears.



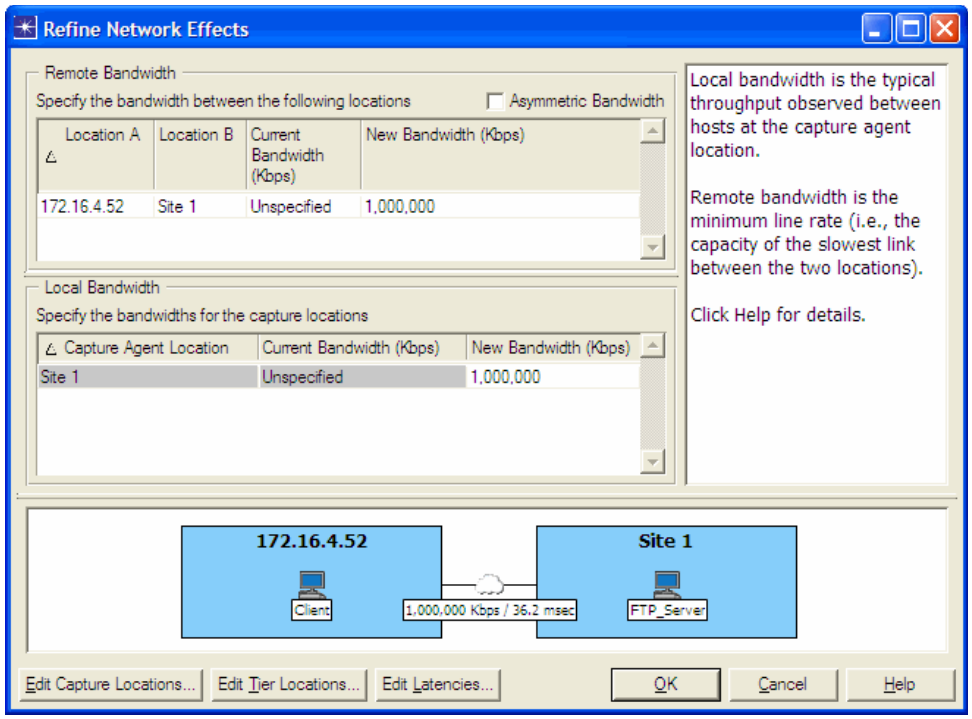
This message indicates that the network effects must be defined to accurately analyze the delay.

3 Click **Close** to close the message box and click **< Back** to return to the Summary of Delays pie graph.

4 Define the network effects:

4.1 Click the **Refine Network Effects…** button.

➥ The Refine Network Effects dialog box appears.



4.2 Specify the bandwidth for the Server Farm network segment.

For the “Local Bandwidth”, enter **100,000** (100 Mbps) in the **New Bandwidth (Kbps)** field.

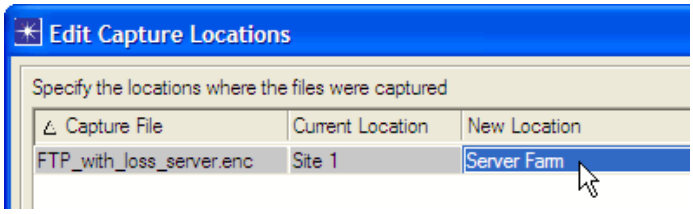
4.3 Set the bandwidth between Server Farm and Client.

For the “Remote Bandwidth”, enter **768** in the **New Bandwidth (Kbps)** field.

4.4 Click the **Edit Capture Locations…** button.

➥ The Edit Capture Locations dialog box appears.

4.5 Enter **Server Farm** in the **New Location** field.



4.6 Click **OK** to close the Edit Capture Locations dialog box.

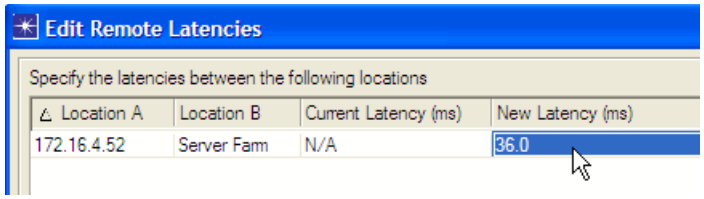
Note—For this tutorial, it is not necessary to edit the tier locations. However, if you click the **Edit Tier Locations…** button, you can enter information about the location of tiers with respect to a capture location. This stage is important if any relevant tiers are not located on the same local segment as the original capture probes.

4.7 Click the **Edit Latencies…** button.

➥ The **Edit Remote Latencies** dialog box appears.

4.8 Set the one-way latency between the Client and the Server Farm.

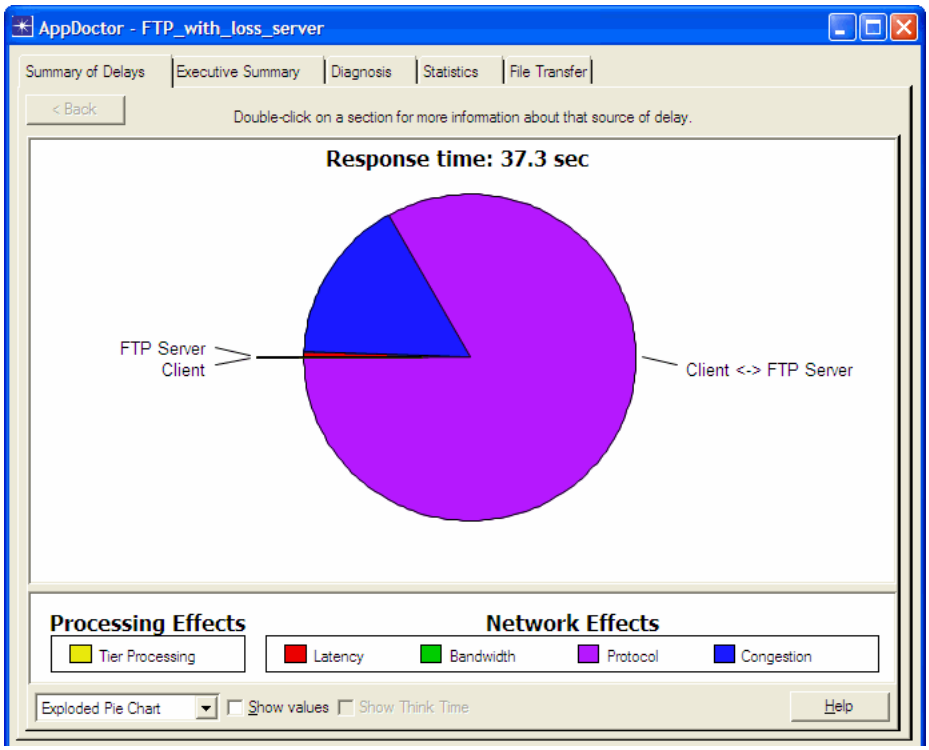
Enter **36** in the **New Latency (ms)** field.



4.9 Click **OK** to close the Edit Remote Latencies dialog box.

4.10 Click **OK** to close the Refine Network Effects dialog box.

5 Notice that the AppDoctor Summary of Delays is updated based on the specified network effects. Also notice that the results no longer report Network Transfer as a delay.



6 Place your mouse cursor in the purple area of the pie chart.

➥ The tooltip for Protocol appears. Notice that the largest contributing factor to the application response time is Protocol Effects.

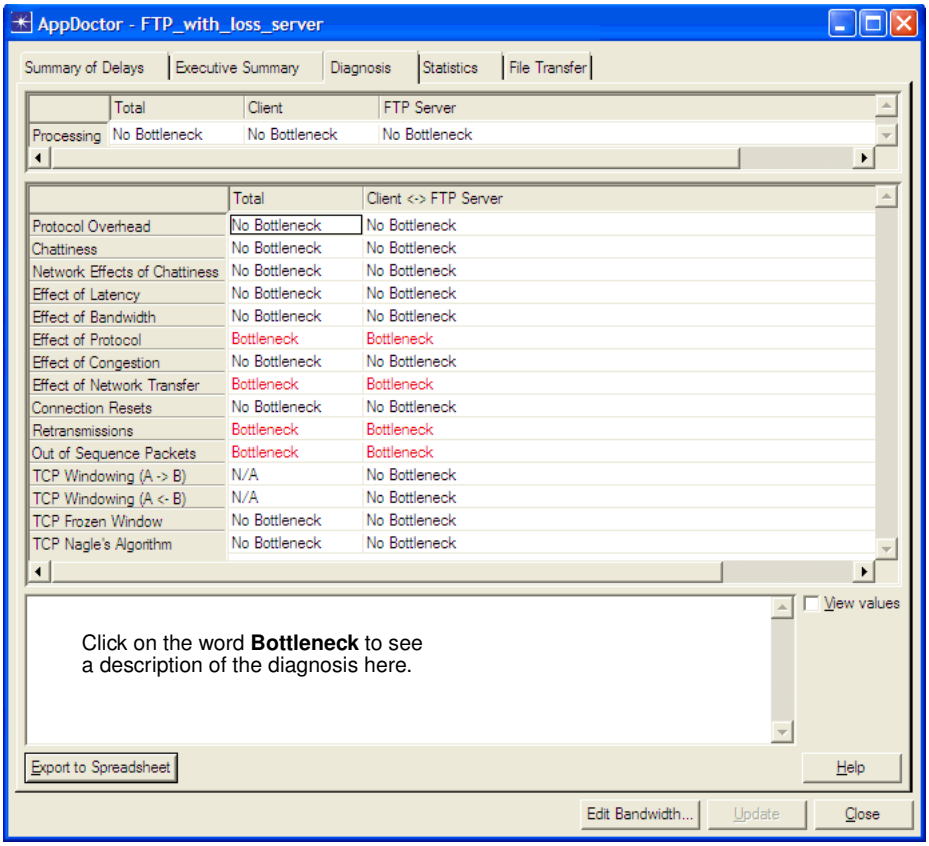
7 Notice that Tier Processing delay (server processing) by both the Client and the FTP Server is not a contributing factor to the application response time.

You conclude that a server upgrade will have little or no effect on download time. A bandwidth upgrade will decrease the download time by no more than about 30 percent.

The Diagnosis function of AppDoctor will provide further insight into the cause of the Protocol delay.

8 Click the **Diagnosis** tab.

Figure 2-10 Diagnosis for the File Transfer



9 The diagnosis reveals four bottlenecks:

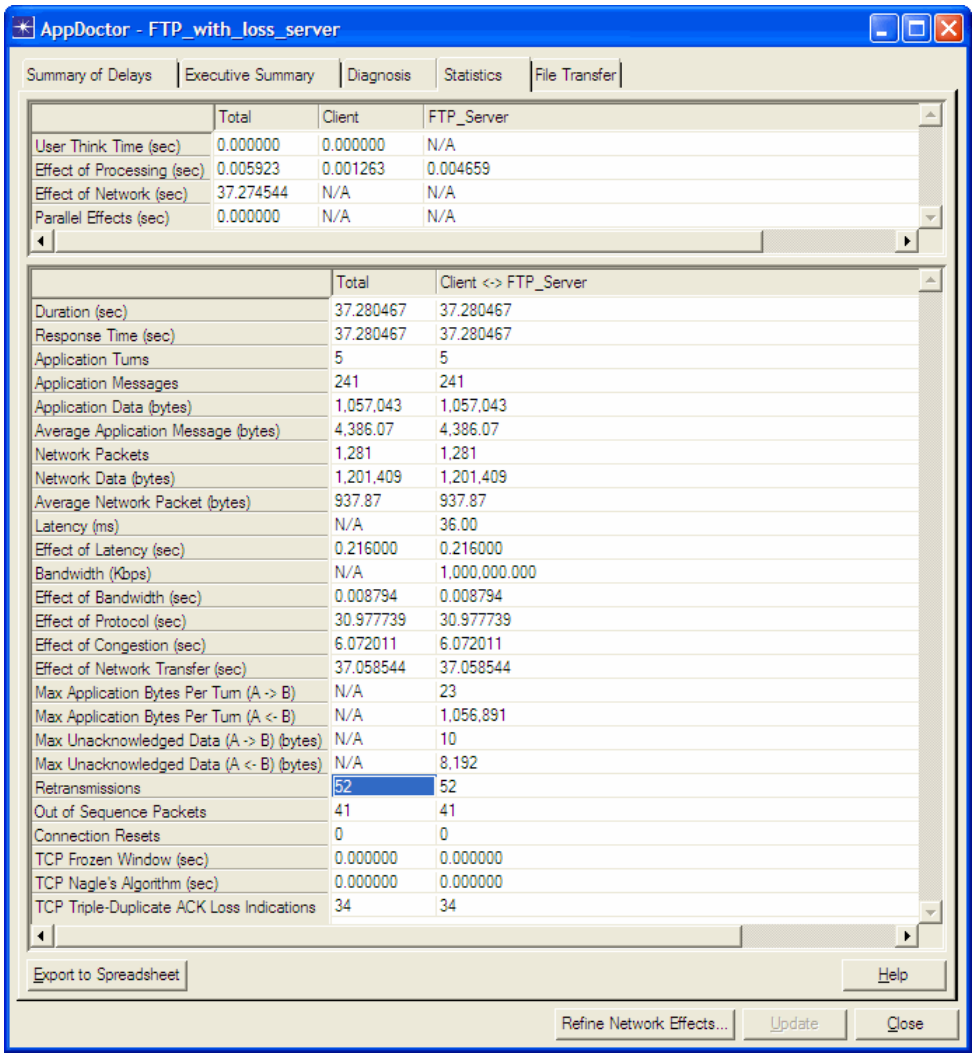
- Effect of Protocol
- Effect of Network Transfer (Bandwidth)
- Retransmissions
- Out of Sequence Packets

The Summary of Delays pie chart showed Bandwidth Delay and Protocol Delay as bottlenecks. One factor that contributes to Protocol Delay is retransmissions. So it is no surprise that here, in the more detailed Diagnosis, you see Retransmissions listed as a bottleneck. The Out of Sequence Packets, also listed as a bottleneck, are a side-effect of the retransmissions. You will explore the retransmissions issue further. Correcting that issue will probably also cure the Out of Sequence Packets problem.

AppDoctor also provides summary statistics for the application transaction. You will examine two in particular: retransmissions and network packets.

10 Click the **Statistics** tab.

Figure 2-11 AppDoctor Statistics



11 Notice that 52 retransmissions occurred during a file transfer composed of 1,281 packets, yielding a retransmission rate of 4 percent. This is a fairly high rate and is the primary cause of the protocol delay.

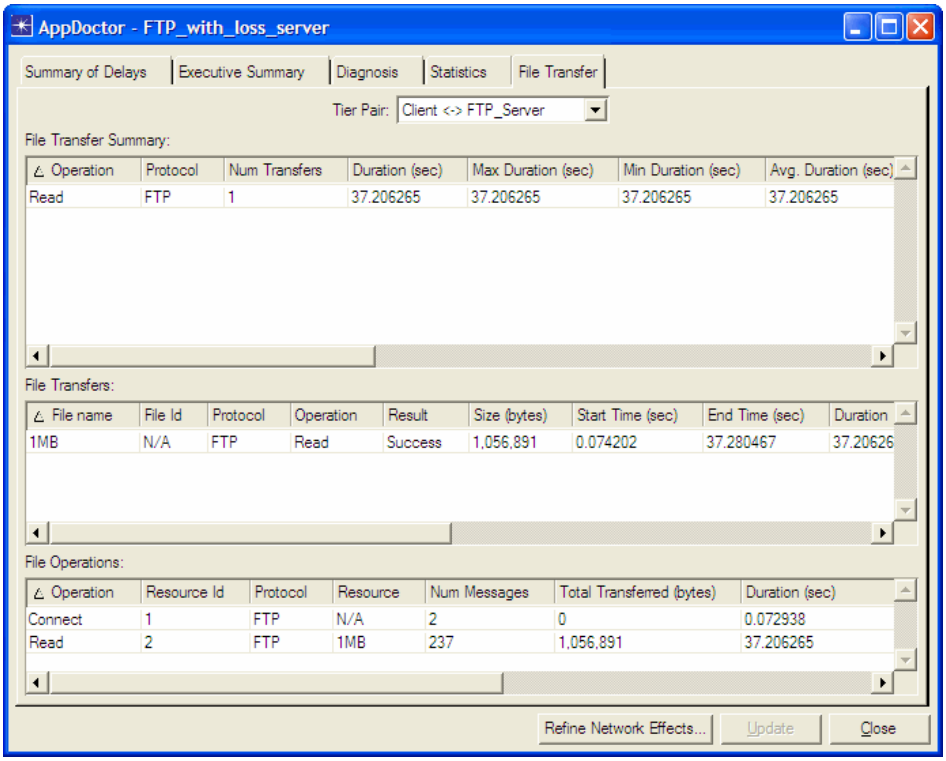
The protocol delay occurs because of two aspects of TCP behavior. Both occur because TCP is responsible for network reliability.

- First, to detect packet loss, TCP uses timers for each packet. When the network drops a packet, TCP waits until the timer expires, then sends the retransmission. Waiting for the timers to expire can greatly increase the application response time.
- Second, packet loss reduces the number of simultaneous packets that TCP sends. This congestion control reduces the throughput of the application and increases the response time.

12 Click the **File Transfer** tab.

This page shows summary information and statistics for the file transfers.

Figure 2-12 File Transfer Statistics



13 Close the AppDoctor window.

End of Procedure 2-3

Examine Statistics

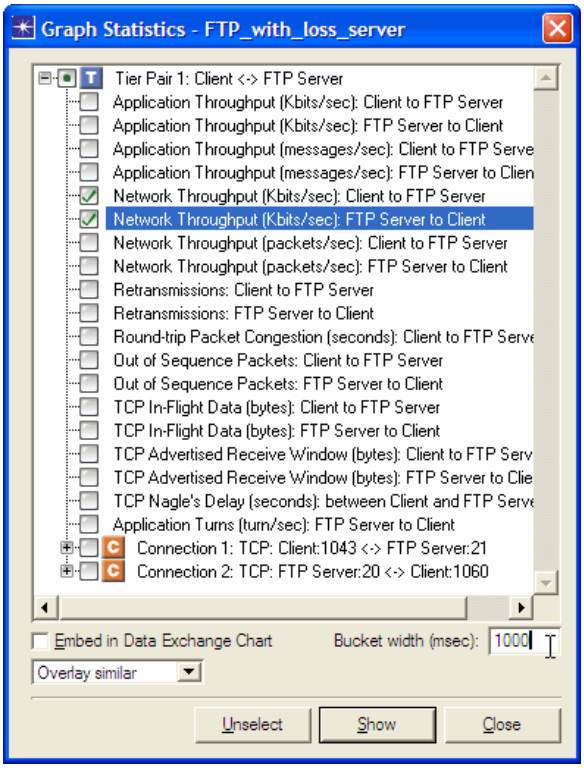
To view the actual network throughput, use the Graph Statistics feature.

Procedure 2-4 Examining Statistics

1 Choose **View > Graph Statistics**.

➥ The Graph Statistics dialog box appears.

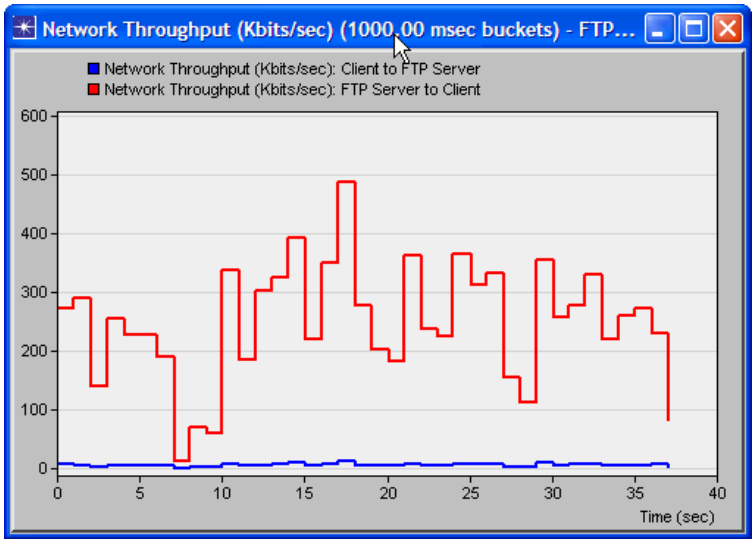
2 Select the two Network Throughput statistics that measure kbits/sec.



3 Set the **Bucket width (msec)** to **1000**.

4 Click **Show**.

➥ The statistics graph for network throughput appears.



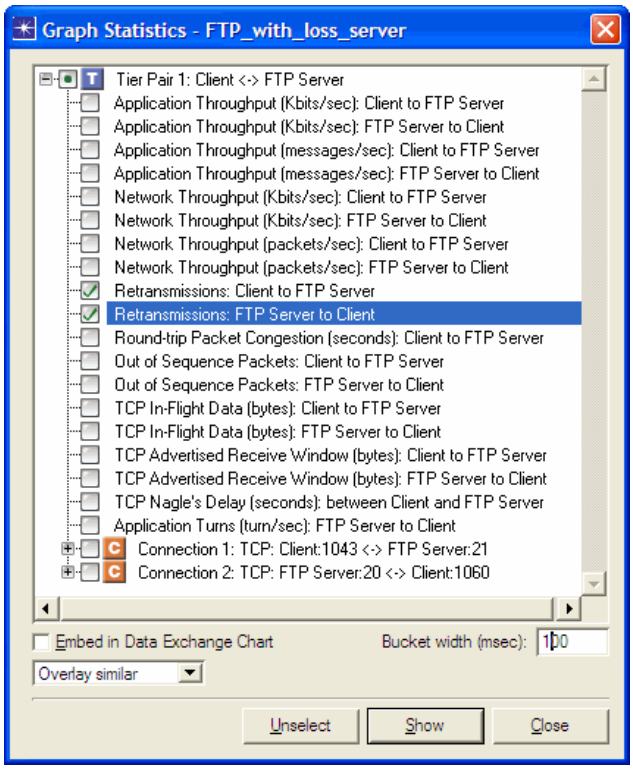
The graph shows the network throughput in each direction for the file transfer.

5 Examine the red line, which represents throughput from the FTP Server to the Client, to see that this traffic averages about 300 Kbps and has a spike to about 500 Kbps. But the Frame Relay circuit has an available bandwidth of 768 Kbps. You conclude that something is throttling the flow of this file transfer over the WAN circuit.

Keep the graph window open, but move it out of the way before performing the next step.

6 Return to the Graph Statistics dialog box. Unselect the throughput statistics and select only the two Retransmissions statistics.

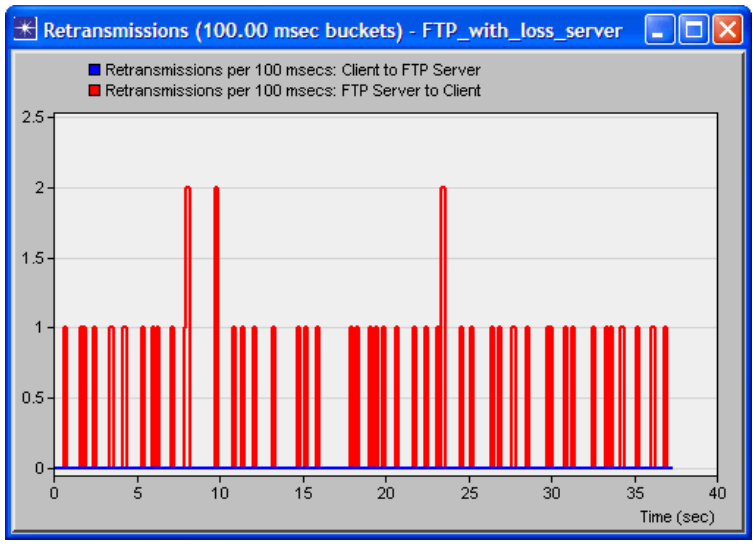
7 Change the bucket width to 100 msec.



8 Click **Show**.

➥ The statistics graph for retransmissions appears.

Figure 2-13 Statistic Graph for Retransmissions



9 Examining the graph, you can see when the packet loss that AppDoctor reported occurs. The red line shows retransmissions from the FTP Server to the Client; the blue line shows retransmissions from the Client to the FTP Server. All of the retransmissions occur on the stream of traffic from the FTP Server to the Client. The loss seems to be fairly evenly distributed throughout the application transaction.

Keep the graph window open, but move it out of the way before you do the next step.

10 With this final piece of information, you can summarize what you have learned about the application from AppTransaction Xpert:

- Application flow is experiencing significant throttling.
- Approximately 68 percent of the file download time is due to protocol effects.
- The application is experiencing 4 percent packet loss.
- Packet loss causes TCP to throttle the flow of data across the network.

11 You conclude that packet loss is mainly responsible for the slow file transfer.

12 Close the Graph Statistics dialog box (but keep the two graph windows open).

End of Procedure 2-4

Now continue with the last task, documenting your analysis.

Publish Reports

There are many ways to publish AppTransaction Xpert information, including:

- Capture screens
- Export AppDoctor information to spreadsheets
- Create MS Word (.rtf) reports
- Create web reports

Web reports provide quick access to the information in your current working environment.

Procedure 2-5 Generating a Web Report

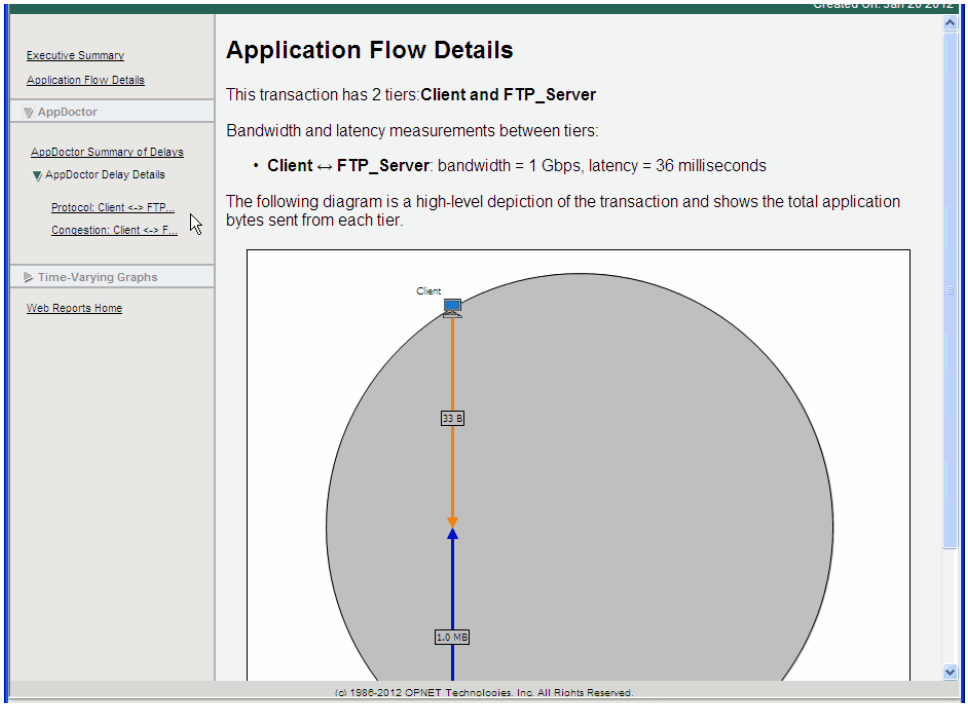
1 Choose **Reports** > **Generate Web Report**…

2 Click **Generate…**, then navigate to the directory to which you want to save the report and click **OK**.

Note—You can specify the location for storing AppTransaction Xpert reports by setting the **ace_web_report_dir** preference.

➥ The web report for your current session opens in a web browser.

3 Click on the links in the navigation pane at the left of the browser to view the charts and graphs that were saved from your session.



End of Procedure 2-5

Conclusion

This tutorial showed how to use AppTransaction Xpert to

- Diagnose a performance problem with a common network application
- Publish and distribute your analysis