

State Agency Assures Quality Employee Experience With NETSCOUT

Gains Quick-Time-To-Value With nGenius Visibility as a Service Consultation

OVERVIEW

The Challenge

- Strategic adoption of SaaS services for communications and collaboration needed visibility
- Users newly working from home reporting degradations

The Solution

- nGenius®PULSE hardware and virtual nPoint sensors
- nGenius Visibility as a Service

The Results

- Assured quality end-user experience, regardless of where their employees perform their jobs
 - Gained quick-time-to-value with support from nVaaS
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Customer Profile

This agency is responsible for managing a government hospital system, which provides health services to admitted patients. The agency oversees multiple hospitals, all licensed by the state's board of health, and they are regularly assessed for meeting regulatory standards for patient care. The agency employs thousands of staff members to provide 24/7 operations across the state, delivering long-term care and treatment of thousands of patients annually.

The Challenge

This agency's needs were evolving as they made changes to their network and application strategies. One priority identified by the network team manager focused on finding ways to reduce Mean Time to Knowledge (MTTK) in a manner that minimized the time his team spent troubleshooting, while also decreasing finger-pointing instances between IT teams. Conversations with the CIO and his key managers in the applications, network, and virtual teams revealed priorities focused on end-user experience for employees using network resources and application services between several hospitals and the data center, as well as cloud and SaaS-based applications.

While these priorities remained, the agency had to focus on new organizational demands brought about by the COVID pandemic. Business continuity issues were spotlighted, as executives, managers, and business level staff (finance / accounting) shifted to a work-from-home model. Some of the unanticipated issues that emerged included:

- Executives and managers working from home offices and at the hospitals began experiencing business continuity issues impacting critical meetings using collaboration tools, including Webex video conferencing

- Remote Workers using VPN services were reporting poor response time performance, intermittent issues with audio and video quality, and dropped VPN sessions, all of which were impacting their ability to do their jobs
- Employees using a remote desktop service (RDS) were being subjected to dropped connections over VPN and slow application performance
- Performance degradations became disruptive to employees using Microsoft Teams and other SaaS applications, impacting their productivity

Bottom line, this agency's top priority became implementing a cost-effective, visibility solution to identify the performance issues quickly and proactively that would help improve end-user experience from wherever their employees were performing their jobs. And due to the challenges presented during the COVID pandemic and work from home orders, they needed the solution to be turn-key.

Solution in Action

Under the leadership of the CIO and CTO, the agency's IT team performed detailed research and analysis of several possible approaches for gaining visibility into the issues facing their user community that would help them reduce MTTK and Mean time to Repair (MTTR). As a result, they selected NETSCOUT's nGeniusPULSE Virtual Server Appliance and a combination of hardware and virtual nPoint sensors. They also contracted NETSCOUT's nGenius Visibility as a Service (VaaS) support option to provide remote deployment and configuration of services critical to successfully implementing nGeniusPULSE to help quickly gain visibility and value from the solution.

nGeniusPULSE with nPoints technology, deployed on various laptops as well as at several agency offices and hospitals, provides the IT team with visibility into:

- Internet service link (ISL) utilization
- VPN performance
- RDS activity

- Wi-Fi and Ethernet performance at remote locations
- End-user experience

Prior to deploying nGeniusPULSE, IT was hindered in its abilities to evaluate and assure service reliability from at-home work environments. The early use of the nGeniusPULSE and nPoints has been successful in finding several issues throughout the agency environment, including identifying wide area network (WAN) circuits with high utilization in need of bandwidth increases and virtual servers with high CPU utilization requiring attention.

In collaboration with the agency's IT staff, the nVaaS experts provided essential expertise and best practices in building synthetic business transaction tests (BTTs) to assess user experience during the pandemic's unique challenges. Specifically, for executives and managers, at home and in the hospitals, who are accessing SaaS platforms, they built tests for key services from home users over VPN, users over WAN links from hospitals, and users at headquarters. This is providing them details on performance and user experience issues with services, including Webex, Microsoft Office 365, and Microsoft Teams. In one case, they uncovered degrading performance with one of their SaaS services for employees over VPN, and further analysis of the nPoint data from all users identified a single user, using a particular WAN provider, that was experiencing the performance problem. This enabled swift, targeted remediation.

For SaaS services accessed by remote users directly over the Internet, due to split-tunneling configurations they were not coming through the data center, the IT team used the nPoint data for visibility to assist in troubleshooting issues with third-party services. In an area that would otherwise be challenging to troubleshoot, the VaaS team was able to identify a problem with an application to the SaaS provider's service that was hindering their at-home employees' productivity.

The Results

As it becomes clear that the new normal will look different than pre-pandemic, this agency is well-prepared to ensure the availability, reliability, and performance of essential business services from wherever employees are operating. nGeniusPULSE is helping the IT team reduce MTTK which has led to direct improvements in MTTR. Within a short period of time, and with the help of the VaaS team, the agency has achieved a rapid time-to-value for their new nGeniusPULSE solution. Pinpointing employee- impacting issues to third-party WAN providers and SaaS vendors has resulted in improved quality of experience and productivity for their executives, managers, and staff, as well as increased problem-solving collaboration with their vendor partners.

Quite simply, for this agency, the use of nGeniusPULSE with VaaS consultative services has provided essential visibility and analysis to reduce issues impacting experience of the remote and home users.

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