

Superior Network Visibility Positions Home Federal Bank to Meet Future Challenges

At a glance

Customer

Home Federal Bank

Industry

Finance

Location

Middlesboro, Kentucky

Network type

WAN encompassing four remote branches

Challenge

How to gain visibility into the workings of the entire WAN

Solution

Installed an OptiView™ Integrated Network Analyzer at the main office

Results

A proactive solution that will alert the IT department immediately if any problems arise

Products used

OptiView Integrated Network Analyzer with wireless LAN analysis option



Overview

Suppose someone blindfolded you and then told you to drive safely down a busy street, stopping at all the red lights and making sure not to hit anyone? While that might seem like a preposterous suggestion, it's not all that different from the problem faced by CIOs and network administrators who don't have good visibility into their networks. They're expected to avoid crashes and keep the network running smoothly, but they have no way to see in real time what is happening within the network infrastructure.

This was the situation in which Charles Pettey, CIO of Middlesboro, Kentucky-based Home Federal Bank, found himself when he joined the bank's IT department. In addition to the main office, the bank has four remote branches scattered within a 60-mile radius. "We had a tightly-run network, and we were not experiencing any problems at the time," says Pettey. "However, because we had no window into what was happening on the network in real time, we were leaving ourselves open to all sorts of problems. With so much of our banking Internet-based, we couldn't afford to have any of our systems go down. We had to be proactive, spotting problems at their inception and solving them before they caused difficulties for our customers."

Realizing the only way to guard against unexpected problems was to have real-time visibility into all aspects of the network, Pettey used the analogy of a blindfolded drive down Main Street to convince his boss to agree to the purchase of a network analysis and monitoring system.

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Home Federal Bank

OptiView Integrated Network Analyzer offers comprehensive network visibility

As a former administrator and instructor with the Cisco Regional Academy program in Kentucky – a cooperative venture between Cisco and the educational system – Pettey had worked with several Fluke Networks products and knew them to be reliable and easy to use. "At the Cisco Academy, we were training high school students to use this equipment, so ease of use was a key requirement," said Pettey. Because of his positive experiences with Fluke Networks products, Pettey turned to Fluke Networks to find a solution to Home Federal Bank's network needs.

He found the solution he was looking for in the Fluke Networks OptiView Integrated Network Analyzer, a powerful tool that provides a comprehensive view of an enterprise's complete network – even looking across routers into remote offices. The OptiView analyzer combines seven-layer protocol analysis, active discovery, SNMP device analysis, RMON2 traffic analysis, and physical layer testing into a mobile solution that can either be carried as a portable device or – as Home Federal Bank did – placed semi-permanently on a network link. While other tools provide visibility into the network segment between the switch and the router, the OptiView analyzer provided the bank's IT staff with much broader visibility, enabling them to see across the routers into all four branches.

Easy, no-hassle installation

“Installation was a breeze,” says Pettey. “We got the OptiView analyzer in early July, hooked it up in half an hour, and it’s been out there running ever since. We have it set up to email us if any problems arise – but we run a pretty tight network, and so far, we’ve had no problems.”

Still, Pettey sleeps better at night knowing he has a proactive solution in place that will anticipate problems before users and customers become aware of them. “If anything ever did start to go wrong, I’d rather learn about it from an email sent by the system than from an angry customer,” he says. “I want to have the system fixed before our customers know there’s even been a problem.”

Future plans

Looking to the future, Home Federal Bank also bought the optional wireless LAN analysis package, which adds wireless monitoring to the integrated network analyzer. “Currently, wireless access is not widely accepted in banking because of the security issues involved,” says Pettey, “but at some point, we plan to add wireless access points into our conference rooms and training center, and when we do, this will give us the ability to monitor them as well. In fact, the wireless capabilities are one of the reasons we chose the OptiView Integrated Network Analyzer in the first place.”

Pettey is also planning to use the integrated network analyzer to monitor the bank’s network security. Each quarter, in accordance with FDIC requirements, the bank hires a third party to inspect its network for security violations. “With the integrated network analyzer, we can scan our own ports prior to these audits and close any holes we find in our security,” Pettey says. “With the number of changes that occur in any network, being able to examine the effects of those changes is a must.”

Does Pettey recommend the integrated network analyzer to other banks? “Absolutely,” he says. “My previous positive experience with Fluke Networks equipment in the Cisco Network Academy program and my satisfaction with their support are what led me back to them. There are other options available, but some are more costly and others do not do the job as well as the Fluke Networks solution. The integrated network analyzer is really the way to go – it’s a great system, and we’re very happy with it.”

NETWORK SUPERVISION

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Printed in U.S.A. 9/2005 2518144 A-US-N Rev A