

SOFTWARE COMPANY DELIVERS HIGH-QUALITY COLLABORATION EXPERIENCES FOR TEAM MEMBERS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME: Allscripts

INDUSTRY: Healthcare IT

LOCATIONS: Chicago, IL USA

EMPLOYEES: 7,000

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

- Support personal global collaboration and reduce travel costs
- Migrate voice and video traffic to a converged, pervasive Performance Monitoring network
- Ensure high uptime with better visibility into traffic flows and behaviors

SOLUTION

- LiveAction's LiveNX*, an application-aware network performance management solution with QoS control

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Improved visibility and control of QoS policies across network, devices, interfaces, and queues
- Gained real-time visibility into end-to-end network traffic flows
- Reduced costs of network links and bandwidth by ability to right-size queues
- Saved significant time in troubleshooting
- Enhanced user experience of voice and video applications

CUSTOMER CHALLENGE

Allscripts provides electronic health records, practice management, and other clinical, revenue cycle, connectivity, and information solutions for physicians, hospitals and post-acute organizations. The Allscripts global network includes approximately 300 network devices and connects 30 locations across North America, Europe, Israel, and Asia-Pacific. The network is based on a Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) backbone to deliver Internet connectivity, interoffice communications, critical enterprise applications, as well as a growing suite of collaboration capabilities. In 2008, Allscripts had begun deploying thick client devices to support the use of Cisco TelePresence conferencing, desktop sharing, and Skype® for Business (formerly known as Microsoft® Lync) conferencing.

“Initially we looked at video as a way to reduce travel costs, provide a more personal experience, and enhance our presentations,” said John Rockwell, Sr. Manager of IT Network Services for Allscripts. “Team members quickly adopted videoconferencing for team meetings and video has become pervasive across our network. Our goal is to enable any team member to initiate a high-quality video session at any time.”

To support that goal, Allscripts is in the process of implementing a Cisco Performance Monitoring architecture. This end-to-end IP architecture will enable pervasive media, facilitate automation, and deliver a cost-effective interactive experience for users. At the same time, Allscripts is migrating its telephony network. At first, Voice over IP (VoIP) was used only for interoffice telephony. However, to reduce costs, Allscripts is replacing its legacy time-division multiplexed (TDM) infrastructure and using VoIP for calls to the public switched telephone network as well as between offices.

With all of these latency-sensitive services running on the network, the IT team needed better visibility into traffic and connections to identify service-affecting issues and accelerate troubleshooting. They also wanted to create and enforce Quality of Service (QoS) policies for video and voice traffic while protecting traffic performance and capacity for business-critical applications.

The team used NetFlow and the command-line-interface (CLI) to create and push out policies to individual network devices. This approach prevented them from easily making sure that changes were affected as needed network-wide. As a result, they lacked end-to-end visibility. In addition, IT wanted the ability to assess the quality of any given network path from end-to-end, instead of using legacy tools such as ping and trace route which do not provide an accurate view of application performance. As part of its best-of-breed approach to network management, Allscripts wanted the best solution available for QoS management.

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SOLUTION

With that in mind, Rockwell and his team investigated a suggestion from Cisco: LiveAction's network experience platform (now known as LiveNX*) with QoS management. LiveAction software provides in-depth network awareness and end-to-end traffic flow visualization, so users can quickly and proactively troubleshoot, remediate, and validate QoS issues. LiveAction is the only management tool available with real-time visualization and point-and-click operations for a wide-range of Cisco technologies, such as QoS, NetFlow, IP Service Level Agreement (SLA), Performance Monitoring, Application Visibility and Control (AVC), Access Control Lists (ACLs), Performance Routing (PfR), Policy-Based Routing (PBR), switching, and Spanning Tree Protocol (STP). After a detailed evaluation, Allscripts purchased the LiveAction Expert Provisioner package, which integrates six LiveAction products—QoS Monitor, QoS Configure, IP SLA, Flow, LAN, and Routing—into a single management system designed for high-performance QoS monitoring, provisioning, and troubleshooting.

“LiveAction was very easy to implement,” said Rockwell. “It automatically scans for devices and includes them, and it identifies the QoS policies that are running on each interface. LiveAction simplifies everything.”

Once deployed, LiveAction enables users to drill down to individual devices or interfaces for detail on traffic flows. Deep packet inspection takes advantage of the capabilities already built into routers and switches, enabling IT to see and trace traffic flows, delays, and application performance. No extra test access points (TAPs) or span ports are needed. Staff can view traffic flows in one-minute increments, making it easier to pinpoint issues when reviewing historical performance. The IT team can also simulate traffic flows to assess performance and proactively identify latency or capacity problems before new applications or services are deployed—all without additional equipment, probes, or testing tools.

“With LiveAction, we’re now able to fine-tune QoS policies and get highly granular statistics to see exactly how policies are performing. Ultimately, it helps us deliver a high-quality end-user experience and increase the return on our voice, videoconferencing, and collaboration investments.”

LiveAction’s graphical user interface (GUI) is unmatched for delivering visibility across the end-to-end network and for measuring performance of any specific path from source to destination. Users can create, deploy, and adjust policies on the fly using a graphical user interface without having to use sophisticated command lines or be certified network engineers.

CUSTOMER RESULTS

“LiveAction gives us great control and visibility,” said Rockwell. “We literally see and trace traffic flows end-to-end across the network in real time. It’s giving us great insight into bandwidth and traffic behavior, along with the ability to drill down and touch any device.”

For example, Allscripts’ Call Detail Record application enabled the team to know how many calls went to the telecom provider. With LiveAction, the team now also sees exactly how much site-to-site VoIP traffic is transported. This data enables IT to right-size network queues and better protect voice and video traffic as this traffic is moved onto the network.

Management software suites are expensive, complex, and require additional network probes to obtain more detailed data. In fact, just one probe can cost tens of thousands of dollars. However, even these solutions do not offer the in-depth visibility that LiveAction delivers.

“LiveAction lets us see exactly what we need to see while still being highly cost effective,” said Rockwell. “We don’t have to compromise visibility or QoS because of cost.”

The ability to apply QoS policies consistently and predictably also helps Allscripts save money on network connections. The IT team can ensure sufficient bandwidth and right-size its telecom infrastructure instead of over-provisioning capacity with high-bandwidth links to ensure QoS. High-priority or latency-sensitive traffic can be carried on prime links and less-critical enterprise traffic can be moved to Internet or other low-cost links.

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LiveAction has also saved significant amounts of time troubleshooting. For example, as IT is performing VoIP call assessments, LiveAction helps quickly isolate problem instances through color-coded status and threshold alerts. IT gained fast, effective troubleshooting capabilities with system-wide awareness and visibility of QoS policies, traffic flows, routes, and performance issues. The same problem isolation capabilities enhance network security because they enable the IT team to quickly identify traffic that might represent a security threat in any path or individual flow.

The software's graphical presentation shows QoS policies and performance from the system topology level down to individual interface and queue levels. Staff can create and edit QoS policies using graphical templates and a policy editor built around Cisco best practices. Once implemented, real-time traffic visualizations and statistics provide instant feedback on QoS changes. Push-button audit reporting analyzes QoS configurations for errors and performance issues and details the information in an easy-to-navigate report. Push-button policy validation during real-time template deployment delivers an error message if a policy template is not correct.

NEXT STEPS

Allscripts plans to broaden the scope of its QoS usage and use LiveAction for centralizing all QoS policies. For example, LiveAction QoS Configure can be used to create policy templates and apply policies consistently across the network to groups of devices. Router QoS configurations can be saved for future use as backups or for automatically scheduled updates. Allscripts also plans to configure alert thresholds in order to fully implement LiveAction alerting capabilities.

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ABOUT LIVEACTION

LiveAction provides comprehensive and robust solutions for Network Performance Management. Key capabilities include Cisco Intelligent WAN visualization and service assurance, best-practice QoS policy management, and application-aware network performance management. LiveAction software's rich GUI and visualization provide IT teams with a deep understanding of the network while simplifying and accelerating management and troubleshooting tasks.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

LiveNX and LiveUX Downloads

Free downloads of [LiveNX](#) and [LiveUX](#) are available now. Visit our webpage to discover more details and benefits of LiveNX and LiveUX.

Upcoming Webinars

Check out our updated [webinar schedule](#)—gain insights from our special presenters about topics like QoS, Hybrid WAN Management, Capacity Planning and more.

Additional Resources

Case studies, white papers, eBooks and more are available for your learning on the [LiveAction resources page](#).

Note: This customer story is based on information provided by Allscripts and describes how that particular organization benefits from the deployment of LiveAction solutions. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described.

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*Product Disclaimer: LiveAction has renamed their software solution, formerly known as "LiveAction" to "LiveNX." From 2016 and on, LiveNX will remain the official name for the software solution.