

CASE STUDY

Media Saturn Management



Europe's Largest Electronics Chain Manages their Network with NetMRI

With net annual sales of over 19 billion euros, Media Saturn Management AG is the largest electronic, entertainment, household appliances, telecommunication equipment, and computer retail chain in Europe. The first Swiss Media Markt branch opened in 1994, and since then, the company has grown enormously large in Switzerland and spread across all of Europe.

With each additional branch that was added to the retail giant, the demands on the corporate network kept rising. From the merchandise information system and the accounting, up to its own on-line store, a flawlessly functioning network became a crucial factor in order to make continuous growth possible without a hitch.

The Problem

All of the Media Markt branches are linked via WAN to the central office in Geroldswil near Zurich. However, the network performance for each branch was below what was needed for their business to run flawlessly. Moreover, the search for the causes of poor performance was often very time intensive. The reason was that an open source product that was used previously did not offer information about the configurations of the network devices and how they impacted the performance of each segment of the network. In addition, all of the configurations had to be updated by hand, a process that literally caused careless mistakes in routine tasks, and in itself was time consuming. Another problem was that the network scans took a very long time, because the streams could not run in parallel. Additionally, it was impossible to satisfy compliance requirements, because the previous solutions that had been implemented did not support the internal policies of Media Markt.

MEDIA - SATURN

The Customer: Media Saturn Management AG, Switzerland

Locations: Media Markt Central Office in Geroldswil near Zurich, as well as 20 additional branches

The solution:

- NetMRI 4

“Although there were no network crashes, our problems were with network performance,” said Franco Carlo Blank, IT Manager at Media Markt in Switzerland. “In addition, all work on the network was very time intensive. We avoided any comprehensive projects in the areas of network change because of the concern that it would take too long. In any event, this situation just could not go on this way.”

After the first set of evaluation testing of a variety of solutions on the market, Emitec AG, a solution provider focusing on network management, recommended NetMRI from NetMRI offers numerous functions for automatically recognizing and managing all changes in the network configuration. In addition, the solution offers a comprehensive platform for network changes and configuration management with integrated intelligence and a plethora of analysis functions. Mr. Blank explained the choice as follows. “After a pilot test of NetMRI the decision was not difficult to make; NetMRI solved the existing problems at a simultaneously reasonable cost.”

Implementation and First Steps

“The amount of time it took to install NetMRI was the biggest plus. Simply plug it in, and the installation was almost complete. Only 30 minutes later, the configuration, the passwords, and the community strings were all defined, and NetMRI was up and running. In about a week, the solution had automatically gathered all of the network data and was totally functional.” The NetMRI Enterprise appliance was deployed to manage up to 2,000 network devices.

Even though Media Markt had initially tested an older version of NetMRI for the demo installation, the company eventually installed the latest version. Mr. Blank describes the switch, “The upgrade ran without a hitch. In addition, the latest version offered an updated GUI and is, thus, even more simplified and straightforward. One especially practical feature was that, despite the update, it was not necessary to open a new handbook, because the various modules can be operated merely by intuition.”

NetMRI in Daily Use

The daily work of Franco Carlo Blank’s IT team begins with a look at the summaries of the current issues—a list of proactive warnings about all network problems that are sorted by urgency—that NetMRI can also send by e-mail. Then, the engineers receives a “to do” list of all of the imminent conflicts or configuration problems that must be remedied. With one click, NetMRI provides information about the potential causes, gives suggestions as to how they can be rectified, and, upon request, can automatically remedy them by means of pre-defined best practices, or through scripts that come packaged inside NetMRI.

“Thanks to the automated analysis and the fast detection of network problems, we were able to save a lot of money since we did not need to hire a full-time outside consultant anymore. NetMRI is my automated expert.”

“My daily work became more effective and convenient through the use of NetMRI. Since the deployment of NetMRI, I can answer questions about the network more promptly.”

Franco Carlo Blank,
IT Manager,
Media Saturn Management



With previous solutions, if configuration changes did not have a direct and immediate negative impact on performance, it was not easy to identify errors. The advantages, as Mr. Blank sees them, are: “Now, every day, with one glance at the dashboard, it is clear where the errors and complications are. Since the issues are marked with the same color codes of red, yellow, and green that are used for traffic lights, the problems are highlighted according to their urgency. In this way, it is even possible to ascertain a ‘smoldering fire,’ which has not caused an acute problem yet, before performance is impaired. The team’s daily work became more effective and convenient through the use of NetMRI.”

Before the installation of NetMRI, a branch’s link to the corporate network would experience problems time and time again. One typical problem was, “when the manager of a branch wanted to check his on-line sales, a network problem would prevent him from accessing the data.” Immediately after the installation of NetMRI, it was clear what was triggering these problems. NetMRI recognized that a duplex mismatch on one of the routers was the basis for the problem. Incorrect duplex settings also caused problems when some branches tried to access a web application. These types of problems are now easily discovered and remedied with NetMRI.

“Another plus point of NetMRI lies in the flexibility of the included policies. With the aid of these policies, we can define how the various network devices—for example, a switch—have to be configured. These electronically stored configurations are checked on a daily basis, and any deviations are reported.” In addition, the issue email, sent by NetMRI, provides information about whether the configurations are being observed. “NetMRI has many prepackaged policies and best practices. Of course, we needed to implement our own rules and regulations. This wasn’t a problem, because we can generate them easily in NetMRI. At the same time, the existing policies were a big help getting us started.”

Media Markt also saw immediate benefit from NetMRI in detecting and resolving VoIP issues. “The deep insight into the network offered by NetMRI is also helpful in order to find problems with VoIP performance issues, because the IT team can see where the errors arise or have already occurred, and how to remedy them,” Franco Marko Blank adds. “We prevent trouble over the entire network, because a NetMRI user can see problems before they affect end users.”



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