

Plixer International Case Study

First National Bank of Pennsylvania

First National Bank of Pennsylvania Cuts Time to Resolution 50 Percent, Saves \$32,000 Annually on Network Monitoring and Analysis with Scrutinizer.

F.N.B. Corporation, headquartered in Hermitage, PA, is a diversified financial services company with total assets of \$8.8 billion as of March 31, 2010. F.N.B. Corporation is a leading provider of commercial and retail banking, leasing, wealth management, insurance, merchant banking and consumer finance services in Pennsylvania and Ohio, where it owns and operates First National Bank of Pennsylvania, First National Trust Company, First National Investment Services Company, LLC, F.N.B. Investment Advisors, Inc., First National Insurance Agency, LLC, F.N.B. Capital Corporation, LLC, Regency Finance Company and F.N.B. Commercial Leasing. It also operates consumer finance offices in Tennessee and loan production offices in Pennsylvania and Florida.



The Challenge

In 2005, the First National Bank of Pennsylvania began experiencing bandwidth issues. Without an effective product to generate insights on network traffic, the network's data transmission was beginning to slow, resulting in slow-to-respond systems (some of which stopped altogether) and dropped and poor quality phone calls as well as numerous calls into the help desk.

In 2006, the task of finding a solution to the bank's bandwidth issues fell to Mark Arblaster, Senior Network Engineer for FNB of Pennsylvania. With around 300 sites talking remotely to the headquarters in Hermitage, PA and other locations, it would become crucial for Arblaster to leverage a network tool to monitor the traffic flow.

“Most of the communication between the remote sites and main sites was transactional data from tellers—sensitive information that needed to be transmitted in a timely manner,” said Arblaster. “ATM transactions also represented a portion of the traffic, so it was crucial for us to manage traffic more efficiently.”

Looking for a fix based on existing relationships, Arblaster contacted his Telco provider and purchased a product off of them to figure out what was taking up the bandwidth. Unfortunately, the product wasn't exactly scalable; this solution was purchased on a per site basis and required hardware to be installed at each site. Because of the cost, this solution was purchased for only four of their sites, and expansion to the rest was necessary to gain a full picture of the situation.

The Solution

In 2009, while surfing Cisco's website for suggested NetFlow analysis products, Arblaster came across Scrutinizer NetFlow and sFlow Analyzer from Plixer, a powerful network monitoring and analysis tool. Pitting three other products against Scrutinizer, Arblaster downloaded trial versions of each of the candidate programs.

After 30 days, Scrutinizer was the clear winner. “In the end, we went with Scrutinizer because of its usability, cost-effectiveness, scalability and the amount of data that the program collects. After the 30-day trial was up, we immediately purchased Scrutinizer.”

With the old solution, FNB of Pennsylvania had to put new equipment into place—costing both time and money. Scrutinizer, on the other hand, was ready to go right out of the box.

One of the first big tests for Scrutinizer came pretty soon after it was implemented. “Someone had sent out a link back to our internet page to all of our employees that contained a flash video,” explained Arblaster, “which the employees all proceeded to click on at the same time. This sent the bandwidth way over the edge; the call center reported poor quality on their calls. With Scrutinizer, we were able to quickly determine where the traffic was coming from and remove the link—all in a span of about ten minutes. Our old solution would’ve taken ten minutes just to get logged into.”

The Benefits

Based on price alone, Arblaster and FNB of Pennsylvania were able to save \$32,000 annually compared to the month-to-month pricing on the old solution. “With Scrutinizer, the only recurring cost was maintenance, and that cost for the entire year was \$800 less than the monthly cost on the old solution—a program that only covered four sites.” They can use Scrutinizer at any of their 300 sites.

On top of the cost savings, Arblaster says that the time to resolution of a bandwidth issue is 50 percent faster with Scrutinizer. “The time to find the information you’re looking for is just a lot shorter with the dynamic capabilities and easy layout of Scrutinizer.”

While the previous product only retained data for 48 hours, Scrutinizer keeps information for as long as the user needs it. Arblaster says the data has been crucial to important forensic work.

Arblaster also says that there was a less-pressing but important residual benefit of implementing Scrutinizer. “With the somewhat complex configurations in the data center used for data replication, we needed a way to verify the configurations and make sure data flow on the right paths we want them headed down. Scrutinizer does this quickly and easily.”

In terms of support, Arblaster says the Plixer team has been extremely knowledgeable and eager to help. “There’s a support link in the Scrutinizer interface for quicker connectivity, and the team has always done everything I need them to do to resolve my issue as quickly as possible.”