

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES— SEPTEMBER 2010

CASE STUDY: VALUE AND ROI ASSESSMENT OF ACCELOPS INTEGRATED DATA CENTER MONITORING FOR A MID-TIER HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION

Introduction¹

A mid-tier enterprise healthcare organization experienced tremendous growth, and as such, made appropriate investments to expand their IT infrastructure. As a result, they sought to advance their IT departments' capabilities to improve service reliability and operational responsiveness. More specifically, they needed to address:

- Service delivery issues due to rapid growth, a fast-paced IT and a diverse IT infrastructure
- Supporting two data centers and 1,000+ employees with a modest IT headcount
- Costs to maintain a variety of IT management products and shareware utilities
- Availability of new, mission-critical business applications
- Meeting service levels and HIPAA regulatory compliance
- Optimizing costs and keeping IT headcount in check

The IT organization chose AccelOps integrated data center and cloud service monitoring platform. By improving processes and leveraging the AccelOps solution, the healthcare provider was able to overcome its operational challenges, become more proactive and service-oriented, as well as realize cost-savings.

In this document, Frost & Sullivan will analyze the healthcare organization's operating environment, requirements, selection process and results. Frost & Sullivan will also characterize AccelOps' turnkey offering as an integrated infrastructure and service-based monitoring approach for enterprises and service providers to consider.

Customer Profile: Healthcare Provider, Mid-Tier Enterprise

This non-profit healthcare provider, based on the West Coast of the United States, serves adult nursing, residential, clinical, rehabilitation and hospice services from two data centers. A relatively small IT staff supports more than 1,000 employees and a diverse infrastructure across sites. This provider has implemented very advanced virtualization, multi-factored authentication, VOIP, wireless and collaboration systems. The heterogeneous infrastructure is comprised of such vendors as Cisco, HP, VMware, Network Appliance, Aruba, SonicWall, Microsoft and Symantec. Since the IT department is lean, it has introduced technologies to automate processes, improve services and fortify safeguarding patient records.

¹ In preparing this report, Frost & Sullivan conducted interviews with representatives of AccelOps and one of their healthcare customers who has used the AccelOps product for one year. The insights and opinions expressed in this assessment are those of Frost & Sullivan and have been developed independently through our research and analysis.

“IT resources are reduced and my staff has to wear many hats. As a result, IT does not have enough time to monitor and analyze all systems from many tools. It was onerous to respond to issues after the fact and use different utilities to understand a problem or the impact of what was not working. The time spent using these same tools to produce reports and operational documentation was equally inefficient,” commented the IT director.

Like many other mid-tier enterprises, the organization has the in-house experience and processes to run IT more effectively; however, resource constraints make managing a complex infrastructure and leveraging the latest technologies a challenge. The IT director sought to assure greater service reliability regarding their new electronic medical records systems (EMR), human resources system, document imaging system, MS-Sharepoint solutions, as well as financial management system. In addition, maintaining security to adhere to HIPAA regulations is an operating priority.

Problem Identification

The IT organization wanted a solution that offered complete infrastructure monitoring and alerting, broad event consolidation and correlation, trending and reports, network inventory and change management, as well as security management to support HIPAA-based documentation. Key requirements were:

- Broad infrastructure and application coverage
- Nominal integration and administration effort
- Inventory and change management, including virtualization monitoring
- Event correlation and noise filtering
- Fault management and root-cause analysis
- Security management to support HIPAA compliance

“As a team, we wanted to improve our capabilities and make better use of our time. More importantly, we did not have immediate access to all the right information to prioritize, collaborate and resolve problems. Paramount was finding a solution that could be easily implemented, provide full infrastructure details, and enable more proactive monitoring,” the IT director said.

Prior to evaluating infrastructure monitoring and management solutions, the IT organization employed tools from leading vendors, such as Solarwinds, ManageEngine, CA, Cisco and HP, as well as some open source utilities. They soon realized that while the tools worked for certain tasks such as configuration management or monitoring a specific

technology, they did not holistically give visibility across the entire enterprise. That meant such solutions would not support the proactive management or operational efficiency that the IT department was seeking.

The organization compiled their requirements and evaluated new IT management suites. In their assessment, each vendor offered different IT monitoring capabilities. To their regret, none of them were fully integrated. In the service provider's opinion, most of the evaluated solutions were piecemeal, administratively heavy or too costly. In addition, none incorporated security and compliance management.

Solution

This healthcare provider selected AccelOps' integrated data center and cloud service monitoring solution. AccelOps collects, manages and stores large-scale data from diverse operational sources in an IT environment in a scalable fashion. In addition, it analyzes the data in real-time and historically to provide end-to-end visibility across availability, performance, virtualization, security, change, and business service management disciplines.

“The biggest factors, not withstanding cost and maintenance, were features, deployment and usability. I wanted to have one centralized data center management platform, and I have limited resources. AccelOps was quick to deploy—it literally took a couple of days to implement. Even the initial discovery took few hours and was accurate. The feature set is extensive and, more importantly, integrated. Right away my team could monitor across functional domains, preempt issues and customize controls all through an easy Web GUI,” said the IT director.

AccelOps is distinguished in the market by providing an integrated monitoring platform that offers significant operational visibility via discovery, monitoring, alerting, analysis and reporting. The feature set includes an automated Configuration Management Database (CMDB), network, system and virtualization monitoring, application performance management, business service mapping and SLA tracking, identity access and location monitoring, and complete Security Information Event Management.

AccelOps cross-correlates infrastructure data from configurations, network flows, logins, events, system logs and performance metrics across network devices, systems, applications, security devices, virtualization, users and directories without requiring agents. A Web interface and built-in knowledgebase provide access to operational dashboards, topology maps, rules, search and reports that are highly customizable.

The healthcare provider had the option to bring the AccelOps solution in-house with AccelOps software virtual appliance or select AccelOps' Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) offering. There is no functional difference between the on-premise and hosted monitoring applications. The organization decided to go the SaaS route after assessing the capital, implementation and operating costs.

“At first, AccelOps’ SaaS option seemed more of an interesting idea. But when I looked at what we needed to accomplish, SaaS started to make a lot of sense, as there are a lot of hidden costs with on-premise software. One obvious concern was that of availability and security. After reviewing the extent of their SLA and security provisions, we were satisfied that they aligned to our requirements. AccelOps doesn’t store company or patient information, only infrastructure data,” the IT director said.

The SaaS solution captures operational data locally via a small virtual appliance Collector application (not an agent running on monitored systems) and securely sends the data to AccelOps' data center for processing, monitoring, reporting and long-term online storage. All the information the IT organization needs is available via the Web interface, where AccelOps maintains the service 24x7x356. If the IT organization needs to monitor more systems, such as IP phones, AccelOps SaaS capacity can be readily expanded by the customer.

“With SaaS, procurement was simple. My staff does not have to maintain or upgrade the system, and I can add to capacity when we need to. With the online Web GUI, we can be in front of potential issues faster and get right to the problem—anywhere, anytime. I have set up monitoring products in the past and have watched engineers work for weeks getting everything perfect. Then each update would add to the workload. With AccelOps’ hosted service, monitoring was up and running in a relatively short time, and my staff does not need to concern itself with updates,” the IT director said.

AccelOps enables the healthcare provider more comprehensive operational controls and resource savings due to improved incident response, better team collaboration, as well as more efficient root-cause analysis.

AccelOps not only monitors the environment from a technology perspective, but also enables the operator to define business services as logical groups of applications and infrastructure components. The business service inherits each component's monitoring attributes. Additional service level can be applied to any component or service. This allows the IT staff to gain a service-relevant view on issues, problems and threats, with

the means to readily pinpoint the component issue and characterize the problem that is affecting the service or impacting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Service-Level Agreements (SLA) or Operating-Level Agreements (OLAs).

Lastly, the customer is seeing security operation improvements with regards to incident management, reporting and support for HIPAA compliance processes.

Immediate post-implementation benefits cited by the customer included:

- **Monitoring:** fully integrated with extensive event and performance correlation—offers tremendous situational awareness and service insight
- **Application:** the solution is easy to use and offers benefit across departmental functions, including security
- **Responsiveness:** proactive monitoring and incident management with complete actionable details
- **Service management:** bottoms-up means to define and effectively monitor services
- **SaaS:** simpler procure and deploy, CapEx to OpEx, rapid results, less administration, scale

Impact: Reduced MTTR with Fast ROI

As mentioned earlier in this case study, this healthcare provider has been using AccelOps' integrated data center and cloud service monitoring solution for more than a year. The customer was able to assess operational improvements and Return on Investment (ROI) details, which were conveyed to upper management as part of due diligence for subscription renewal. As illustrated in figure 1, operational improvement spanned change management, resource utilization and access visibility, incident management and related root-cause analysis for network and application issues, as well as security management.

Operational Process	Efficiency Benefit
Configuration Management and Change Validation	70-80% accuracy and timing for declaring, documenting and trending changes patterns. Enables real-time means to validate changes and impact with records for what changes, when a change was made and who made the change.
Access Management	90% improvement in identifying and trending infrastructure resource access and utilization.
Network Performance Management	40-50% efficiency in identifying and diagnosing L3 transit (network infrastructure) issues and problems.
Application Performance Management	70% improvement in identifying and diagnosing L7 (application and user experience) “sluggish performance issues” and problems.
Security Management and Compliance	80-90% improvement in security operations and supporting HIPAA compliancy documentation and policy monitoring processes.

Figure 1; AccelOps’ Operational Efficiency Benefit

In terms of business service management, the customer contends that AccelOps provides a more holistic, service-oriented and cost-effective approach to data center monitoring than other alternatives. Based on the above assessment of operational benefits, AccelOps has materially reduced MTTR.

The organization needed to build out their IT management capacity, including security. With the selection of AccelOps, they could reduce license and maintenance cost of at least four other products. That also lowered respective training and capital operating costs associated with those products.

The IT director estimates that AccelOps’ capital costs are generally competitive against similar IT monitoring suites. However, he believes AccelOps’ administration, ease of use, feature set and knowledgebase offer greater value than that of viable IT management suites.

“Solutions from leading Tier-1 vendors in this sector are several times more expensive considering all the modules, licensing and effort it takes to produce the same results that AccelOps’ tool offers out of the box. With each release over the past year, AccelOps continues to add useful features. I found them to be very responsive to suggestions or to support new devices and applications. We are very pleased with our investment,” concludes the IT director.

Given the above operational efficiency gains applied across his team, the IT director estimates a savings of one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)—enabling him to keep his organization relatively flat. The above analysis contributed to their purchase and subsequent renewal justification.

Conclusion

AccelOps' innovative approach to performance monitoring and data center management helps mid-tier enterprises, large organizations and service providers improve service reliability and meet service-level commitments with substantive operational efficiency and cost benefit. AccelOps is distinguished among vendors in this market based on the ingenuity, automation, sophistication and value of integrating cross-IT functional domain monitoring, analysis and reporting capabilities.

Organizations that are maturing beyond point solutions, seeking IT management tool consolidation, assessing their legacy IT management suites, advancing service management processes or implementing cloud computing services are well advised to shortlist AccelOps.

About AccelOps

AccelOps integrated data center and cloud service monitoring solutions bring unparalleled operational intelligence, service insight, efficiency and security to enterprises and service providers. Delivered as a scalable virtual appliance, or SaaS, the AccelOps platform cross-correlates and manages diverse operational data on-premise, off-premise and in cloud environments to provide proactive performance, availability, security, change and business service management. AccelOps enables service delivery with end-to-end visibility, efficient root-cause analysis, reduced MTTR, and compliance automation. AccelOps, with offices in Silicon Valley, London and Shanghai, markets its solution direct and through a network of authorized partners. See our breadth, depth and value by visiting <http://www.AccelOps.net>.

About Frost & Sullivan

Frost & Sullivan, the Growth Partnership Company, enables clients to accelerate growth and achieve best-in-class positions in growth, innovation and leadership. The company's Growth Partnership Service provides the CEO and the CEO's Growth Team with disciplined research and best-practice models to drive the generation, evaluation and implementation of powerful growth strategies. Frost & Sullivan leverages 49 years of experience in partnering with Global 1000 companies, emerging businesses and the investment community from more than 40 offices on six continents. To join our Growth Partnership, please visit <http://www.frost.com>.