

IT Outsourcer/Automobile Manufacturer

Network Resource Manager – NRM

IT Outsourcer Uses Visionael® NRM to Quickly Gain Control of Automobile Manufacturer's Worldwide Network

For more than four decades, this Outsourcer has been helping customers maximize the value of their IT resources by improving their operational efficiency. But when assuming the IT operations for one of America's "Big Three" automobile manufacturers, it faced an exceptional challenge: assuming the auto company's full network and IT operations, from the network to the desktop.

The scope of the challenge was intensified by the fact that despite the network's sprawling, reach, there was no central repository of inventory and configuration data. The customer was using Excel spreadsheets, Access databases and Visio drawings which were converted to a PDF format for Web viewing. This system was fundamentally unable to keep information up-to-date and available to those touching the network around the world. An in-house developed system was used to track network assets, spares and data collection tools for Cisco devices.

"By choosing Visionael NRM, the Outsourcer realized a host of business-critical benefits that allowed it to serve the auto manufacturer with excellence, as well as meet its contractual obligations for SLAs."

Visionael NRM provides comprehensive network management capabilities

Realizing that it needed to quickly inventory the auto manufacturer's network resources—the first step in meeting the aggressive service level agreements (SLAs) it had promised—the Outsourcer replaced the antiquated systems with Visionael® Network Resource Manager (NRM) to afford a single, unified view of the network from a logical and physical perspective. The Outsourcer also needed to capture the manufacturer's entire local area network and metropolitan area network (LAN/MAN) environment in just six months. This included more than 180 sites and over 35,000 active devices—with Cisco, Cabletron and ODS device types being the most prevalent—and encompassed core, access and end-user information.

During the six-month information capture period, the Outsourcer was contractually obligated to provide several deliverables for each site/campus:

- Logical diagrams that documented the sites' core network equipment and connectivity
- Cabinet elevation views
- End-user connectivity reports (Cube / Jack numbers to the switch port)
- Core connectivity reports

Industry/market:

Outsourcing/automotive

The Network Environment:

A mission-critical network comprising more than 180 sites and over 35,000 active devices.

The Challenge:

To discover and catalog, at an extremely granular level, the components of the automobile manufacturer's network—in just six months.

The Solution:

The Outsourcer used Visionael NRM for network resource discovery, the central repository for network information and the trusted source to feed data to other network management systems. The Outsourcer was also an early adopter of the product's Spares Management capability, which allows NRM to deploy and retire spare inventory to/from the production network.

The Benefits:

Visionael NRM provided three key benefits: First, NRM enabled automated data collection and reconciliation, replacing a significant amount of the time spent on manual site audits. Second, the product's central repository allowed immediate access to all the data both for engineering change and configuration management. Third, the addition of Visionael NRM to the network management infrastructure expedited problem resolution through integration with trouble ticket systems.

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In addition, the Outsourcer had to collect sufficient data to effectively and accurately manage the auto manufacturer's network on an ongoing basis. Each site had a service level associated with it.

A rapid, systematic approach

To maximize the team's productivity during the discovery period, the Outsourcer took a site-by-site approach to collecting data and loading information into Visionael NRM. Staffing included network engineers trained by Visionael Corp. who were responsible for collecting device configuration data using Visionael Data Collection, as well as staff freed up from the Outsourcer's other projects. This group was tasked with relocating discovered devices into cabinets and manually entering non-SNMP devices using Visionael Studio. Connectivity information was collected in the field and formatted in pre-defined Excel spreadsheets, and then loaded into NRM using automated load routines. Device attribute information (such as bar codes) was handled in a similar manner.

To ensure the quality and timeliness of the information from the field—primarily the patch panel and cross-connect data—a separate team was put in place to evaluate its completeness and accuracy prior to passing it on to the site data entry staff. Additionally, an overall project management team was responsible for the timely receipt of data from the field as well as maintaining delivery dates. As part of this process, a client delivery manager liaised and managed the relationship with the auto manufacturer.

Visionael NRM gains the Outsourcer's trust

After working with Visionael NRM for a few weeks, the Outsourcer recognized that it could depend on the product as the central repository and the trusted source to feed data to other network management systems. During the initial phase of the information gathering exercise, data extracts (CSV files generated at regular intervals) were used to feed other management systems. Tighter integration with these other systems was implemented afterward.

The Outsourcer was also an early adopter of the Visionael Spares Management capability, which allows NRM to deploy and retire spare inventory to/from the production network. This allows the Outsourcer to have an even greater control over the auto manufacturer's inventory and change control processes.

Multi-faceted return on investment

By choosing Visionael NRM, the Outsourcer realized a host of business-critical benefits that allowed it to serve the auto manufacturer with excellence, as well as meet its contractual obligations for SLAs.

Epilogue:

Several years after initially deploying NRM at the automobile manufacturer, the Outsourcer implemented enhancements including:

- Integration with other network management systems such as Trend, Remedy ARS, Tivoli Netview and Peregrine Asset Center
- Utilization of Visionael ServiceBase for automating network change processes
- Utilization of a MAC address discovery utility that is used for determining end-user counts

Customer Profile:

The Outsourcer is a leading worldwide provider of comprehensive IT outsourcing services. The automobile manufacturer is one of America's "Big Three" producers of vehicles.

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First, Visionael NRM provided a powerful alternative to previous manual management methods. With no accurate, company-wide view into inventory and logical and physical configuration, the engineering and change management process was slow and inaccurate. Documentation could not be kept up-to-date and shared around the company. NRM enabled automated data collection and reconciliation, replacing a significant amount of the time spent on manual site audits.

Second, the product's central repository allowed immediate access by the Outsourcer, and the company, to all the data both for engineering change and configuration management. As a result, the auto manufacturer was able to retire myriad fragmented management systems and achieve significant cost savings.

Third, the addition of Visionael NRM to the network management infrastructure expedited problem resolution; trouble tickets had previously taken an average of 45 minutes to complete, compared to using NRM to auto-populate tickets.

The Outsourcer implements additional NRM functionality

After the initial worldwide inventory was completed, the Outsourcer implemented several enhancements that further leverage the power of Visionael NRM:

- Integration with other network management systems such as Trend, BMC Remedy Action Request System (ARS), Tivoli Netview and Peregrine Asset Center
- Utilization of Visionael ServiceBase for automating network change processes
- Utilization of a MAC address discovery utility that is used for determining end-user counts.

Visionael Corporation, a privately-held company, enables IT professionals to more effectively manage their networks. Visionael solutions empower large enterprises, government agencies, outsourcers and service providers to discover, design, deploy, provision, and operate mission-critical networks.

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