Healing a Hospital's Network

Longstanding issue at hospital identified and resolved by Apparent Networks' solution within minutes of installation

Introduction

Apparent Networks' PathView and AppCritical solutions are being used by a major, Texas-based pediatric hospital. This non-profit organization offers pediatric care in more than 30 services and specialties. The hospital and its affiliated clinics and physicians' offices record more than 1 million patient encounters each year.

The Problem

The hospital's staff uses wireless PCs for facility-wide access to patient records, doctor's orders and other information. After roll out, doctors and nurses began reporting slow response times and occasional disconnects. Using traditional network management tools, the hospital's IT team and their consultants were unable to locate or diagnose the problem. Spotty application performance continued for more than a year, frustrating the medical staff and impacting their productivity

The Resolution

The hospital's IT team turned on Apparent Networks' real-time monitoring to analyze the problem. Within minutes, the solution's sophisticated analytics showed that the problem was stemming from a driver or configuration problem with the wireless PCs, and provided suggestions for how to fix it. Armed with that intelligence, IT team members changed a configuration setting, reset the clients and immediately restored available bandwidth to the proper levels. The medical staff saw immediate performance increases with the applications and experienced no more random disconnections.

Apparent Networks' Active Path Analysis

Unlike traditional, device-centric management systems, which only provide data on network availability, Apparent's solution creates a new, 'application path' perspective. This approach focuses on the complete network paths used by application traffic. It looks at how network performance impacts application delivery on an end-to-end basis. By taking this perspective, our tools can link network performance to the quality of the user experience for all voice, video and data applications.

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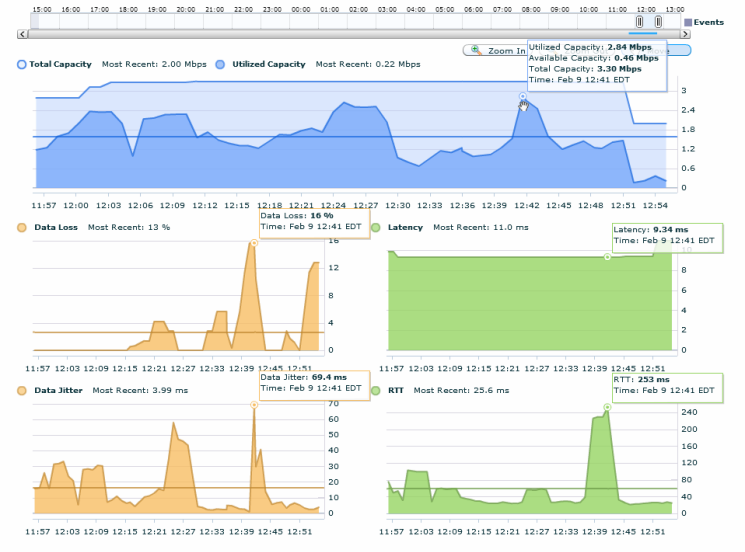
The Solution

The hospital's IT team used Apparent Networks' real-time monitoring capabilities to analyze their complete networks paths from the application server out to the wireless PCs. Previously they had tried to diagnose the problem with traditional network management tools. Those tools could neither find nor diagnose the issue because the problem was related to the hospital's network paths, not its network devices.

With its network path analysis, the Apparent Networks solution showed suspiciously high utilization rates with the PCs' wireless clients. It also identified significant fluctuations in available bandwidth to those devices. Other test results showed that the problem was related application traffic flow between the hospital's LAN and WAN. Our analysis of network path data pointed to a device driver configuration setting as the source of the problem. The customer's IT team focused on the wireless clients and quickly saw that a 'Power Save Mode' setting was mistakenly left on when the devices were originally configured. A simple change to that setting and the problem the IT team had struggled with for more than a year was resolved in a matter of minutes.

The Outcome

With performance restored to expected and acceptable levels, the medical staff's efficiency and productivity increased dramatically. Without PathView and AppCritical, the program for accessing patient care applications with wireless PC ultimately might have been scrapped. After all, the IT team had been trying to fix the problem for over a year. With Apparent Networks, however, they were able to see, understand and fix the problem – all in about two hours. At Apparent Networks, we like to think that our solution played at least a small role in helping some of the children in that hospital get better faster.



Within minutes of starting to monitor the network path used by the hospital's wireless clients, the Apparent Networks solution identified the cause of the fluctuations in available bandwidth, and provided suggestions on how to fix the problem.

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