

Industrial Supplier Implements Network Refresh Weeks Ahead of Schedule

Customer Profile

Industry: Construction & Industrial (*Retail, Wholesale & Facilities Management*).

Annual Revenue: 5.12B USD

Customer Base: 500,000

Number of SKUs: 800,000

Locations: 300 (36 US States, 6 Canadian Provinces)

"We didn't have a tool that provided the level of data that NetBrain did and the application provided some quick wins for us, so it became a no brainer."

Team Lead, Sr. Network Engineer

With more than 300 locations in the United States and Canada, this company is one of the largest industrial suppliers in North America. The company's Global Support Center Network Team is responsible for overall network operations including infrastructure management, event monitoring, and management, incident response, change management, and provisioning support. This company selected NetBrain to automate their network documentation process and for supporting network operations management during the annual technology refresh project.

The Challenge

The network team manages a large and complex IT infrastructure comprised of 1500+ routers, switches, and other devices. The task of documenting design and configuration consisted of gathering information from device tables and various tools and stitching this data together to create diagrams in MS Visio manually. Due to the significant time and effort that this process took, the team did not keep the network documentation up-to-date. The lack of available network documentation meant the team had a very limited understanding of the current network design and configuration.

The 10-person team was tasked with conducting a network discovery in preparation for the annual equipment refresh. However, performing the network discovery manually meant the team would have to dig through the ARP tables to manually identify the correlation between MAC addresses and IP addresses, a considerable manual effort. Engineers would also have to manually create the maps and diagrams that would serve as a reference for the technology refresh. These activities would be time-consuming, and prone to errors, so the company decided to automate the network discovery and documentation process ahead of the upgrade.

The Solution

One of the requirements for acquiring a solution was automating the discovery of device configuration. This was needed to establish baselines and gain visibility of all the devices affected by the updates. Additionally, the company wanted a solution that could automate site documentation and keep it up-to-date. The team was also looking for a simple method for equipment data searching, and a single tool that would consistently

Easing the burden of Documentation

"The easy site documentation and equipment data searching capability were key in making our decision. The day to day equipment management (adds/removes) was also easy compared to some other tools".

Team Lead, Sr. Network Engineer

produce reliable data. Lastly, the company wanted a scalable solution that could form the foundation for automating network management tasks in the future.

NetBrain was selected to help accelerate the discovery and documentation phase of the technology refresh project. NetBrain was used initially to perform a full network discovery to automate the creation of diagrams and documents to highlight L3/L2 topology and design. The company selected NetBrain in part for the ease of capturing site documentation and equipment search data in a graphical interface (Dynamic Maps), as well as the ability to efficiently manage equipment regularly (adds/removes). Moreover, it only took two weeks for the company to begin realizing efficiencies such as quickly identifying device connections and configuration and even pinpointing rogue devices that were not visible before. The NetBrain deployment helped the company to meet the compressed schedule for the upgrade, reducing discovery and mapping from a month to 5 days.

The Results

The team was able to update their knowledge of network design and configuration:

- Documented baseline configuration: ARP, MAC, and CDP information for all network devices. Having this information readily available allowed the team to identify and isolate changes in the environment quickly.
- Displayed a representation of the equipment connectivity and layout at a site on-demand, through NetBrain's Dynamic Maps.
- Provided a vendor match to MAC addresses; which allowed the team to identify rogue devices on the network. In a specific instance, they were able to locate a home class router connected to the network handing out invalid DHCP.

For one of the largest industrial suppliers in North America, selecting NetBrain for network discovery and documentation was only the beginning. For the refresh project, they were able to significantly shorten the prep phase and accelerate the deployment of new technology from weeks to days. They effectively minimized unplanned downtime by anticipating issues that could have otherwise resulted from blind network changes. Soon, the team will be utilizing NetBrain to automate more network management and maintenance tasks.

About NetBrain Technologies

At NetBrain Technologies, we've developed the first operating system for total network management. Leveraging our innovative software solution, network management becomes simple and visual through dynamic maps. Our mission is to empower network professionals, enhance IT collaboration and reduce the manual efforts associated with documenting and troubleshooting complex networks. To learn more, visit info.netbraintech.com/watch-demo.

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