

How NetBrain Drives Visibility & Automation across 105 sites for a Manufacturing Giant

In July 2020 we caught up with one of our leading manufacturing customers to learn more about their application of NetBrain and the value they're realising. We sat down with their Technology Development Manager, and Leading Network Engineer to hear the story of how NetBrain was adopted and how that journey has taken them from mapping to integrating NetBrain with ServiceNow to help populate their tickets with network maps and procedural runbooks to help streamline their troubleshooting processes.

Greater Control of a Complex Network

Being a global company of more than 80 years of age, the network is large and complex. Our guests described a network spanning 105 sites across the world, including 10+ countries in Europe, sites in Africa, India and the Middle East.

As documentation processes hadn't been accurately centralised or standardised, no one really had a holistic picture of the network, and getting information on network devices at each site meant requesting the information from a local technician. Limited visibility also affected communication centrally as well. Site teams often didn't have visibility of necessary information such as when a device was at end of life, end of support, or even how it was connected. This was keeping our guest and his team of technicians extremely busy.



Our network team and regional engineers use NetBrain to troubleshoot incidents and gather data they previously didn't have the means to."

- Technology Development Manager

With visibility automation being one of the key drivers our guests explained how they settled on NetBrain; “We use multiple vendors in our network. Cisco has Cisco Prime and Cisco DNA but they can’t find other tools and devices. [We have] CheckPoint Firewalls, Palo Alto Firewalls, Load Balancers, Wireless LAN Controllers, Routers...all our end systems and end points are visible in NetBrain.”

Once the network was discovered including 1000+ switches and router devices and over 2000 access points, the broader team was given access to NetBrain. “Teams had their own accounts and they were using [NetBrain] to create topology maps, search IPs and device diagnostics.” New employees would also use NetBrain to understand the topology of the network. Our guests found NetBrain didn’t just make their lives easier but also the wider teams; they no longer needed to come to the central NetOps team half as often as they once did.

Troubleshooting Incidents

Our guests are also utilising NetBrain to regularly troubleshoot incidents and are certainly reaping the rewards. On top of mapping automation, the team is using Data Views to abstract information on the network via NetBrain. Data gathering has now been widely democratised with engineers and technicians being able to perform faster data gathering and troubleshooting tasks. Our guest comments; “Application and System teams don’t know how to use CLI within the network. The network is different because you can’t use windows or Linux [you use CLI] but CLI is different”. NetBrain pulls information from the CLI and running commands and data views is a much simpler task that no longer needs this specialist knowledge. As a result, the Lead Network Engineer and his team deal with much fewer escalations which are usually of a much more complex nature.

It's also been easier for the Network team to communicate with the wider teams outside of the engineers and the site technicians. As the network is central to everything, there are many occasions when fingers are being pointed in direction of the network team, however, they have been faster to MTTI (Mean Time To Innocence), being able to close off allegations of the network being the root cause of events and helping wider incidents get resolved faster in the process.

Running Troubleshooting through ServiceNow

Recently, our guests have also integrated NetBrain into ServiceNow taking their troubleshooting processes one step further. Now, when specific incidents are raised in ServiceNow, a topology map is created in the ticket and a set of basic troubleshooting tasks are run automatically. The data is gathered, ready and waiting for the network engineer and his team to review. This has sped up MTTR (Mean Time to Resolution) even further and means less work needed when the team finally open the ticket. Much of the information they needed to go and find is already there, waiting for them in the ticket. This has allowed them to get on with fixing the issue or otherwise begin troubleshooting at a more advanced stage, knowing many of the basic checks have been done.

Making Accurate Network Changes

The other topic we covered in our brief chat was that of network change and how NetBrain is now being utilised to make changes with greater assurance and accuracy. Like everyone else our guest's planning, implementation and verification of network changes required seamless planning and was prone to human error. With the Adoption of NetBrain's Change module, changes are now planned in a pre-documented workflow. Our guests have a data snapshot pre and post change that's being compared, and if a change is unsuccessful or discrepancies are found then it's easier to simply roll back. What's more, is that the entire change is documented automatically.

For one of the largest European manufacturing companies we hope their current success with NetBrain marks the foundations of what they will go on to realise. With upcoming projects such as cloud adoption we are already looking forward to showing what else we can do to support their network.

About NetBrain

Founded in 2004, NetBrain is the market leader for network automation. The NetBrain platform automates the resolution of every network incident, helping NetOps teams resolve 100s or 1,000s of tickets daily. Today, more than 2,400 of the world's largest enterprises and managed services providers use NetBrain to automate network troubleshooting, accelerate change management and documentation, and strengthen network security – all while integrating with a rich ecosystem of network management tools. NetBrain is headquartered in Burlington, Massachusetts, with offices in Sacramento, California; Munich, Germany; London, the United Kingdom; Toronto, Canada and Beijing, China.