World's Leading Risk Management Firm Avoids Network Risk

Cisco Smart Net Total Care gives Aon greater network visibility of remote offices

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aon
- Risk management and consulting services
- Sydney, Australia

Business Challenge
- Provide greater network visibility for highly distributed regional network
- Eliminate error-prone manual inventory
- Prevent network risk

Network Solution
- Cisco Smart Net Total Care

Business Results
- Saved one month in inventory reconciliation
- Reduced service agreements by more than 50 percent
- Overall reduction in network risk

Challenge

Aon is Australia's leading provider of risk management, insurance and reinsurance brokerage, and human resources solutions and outsourcing services. Globally, Aon has more than 65,000 employees in over 120 countries.

Backed by broad resources, industry knowledge, and technical expertise, Aon professionals help a wide range of clients develop effective risk management and workforce productivity solutions. Aon's total worldwide revenue for 2012 was US$11.5 billion. It ranks as the world leader in insurance brokerage, captive insurance companies, and employee benefits consulting services.

Maintaining market leadership demands that Aon operate a sophisticated and highly integrated IT system to manage the rate of change in the fast moving world of international finance. Timely access to critical data helps the company's employees make well-informed management decisions for its broad-base of clients. The network provides a competitive edge. That's why it's essential that Aon's network always operate smoothly with minimal risk to sustain that excellence.

Aon's Australian office is responsible for ensuring that the company's network throughout the Asia-Pacific region operates reliably. The office was increasingly concerned that network changes being made in remote offices were not being tracked accurately. Aon used a manual process to monitor its device inventory, but it could not keep pace with the rate and the magnitude of change: New devices were installed without headquarters' notification, limited contract visibility contributed to gaps in service coverage, IOS versions were not consistent or up to date and, in many instances, devices approaching end of life or end of service were often overlooked.

What Aon needed was a solution that provided them with a complete and consistent view of their network installed base consisting of over 2000 chassis and 700 cards, plus a process to help them get there. Without this, the company was at considerable risk of exposing its network to failure. And when your greatest asset as a risk management company is your reputation, that exposure is not a risk you want to take. Aon turned to Cisco to see if it had an answer for its network maintenance challenges.

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Richard Pedler, Network Engineer, Aon

Solution

Having successfully worked with more than 1500 companies interested in improving the maintenance of their network installed base, Cisco had the perfect solution for Aon in Cisco® Smart Net Total Care.

Smart Net Total Care provides a single installed base management solution, including service contract management, foundational technical services, and device diagnostics, plus security and other alert notifications for Cisco products. Using its ability for detailed discovery of Cisco branded network devices, Smart Net Total Care offers actionable intelligence and proactive support capabilities that can reduce operating costs and minimize downtime.

Smart Net Total Care also featured three additional capabilities that Aon's manual inventory process could not provide:

1. Automated software foundation for managing its installed base

2. Insights on service coverage for improved service contract management

3. Easy access to device alerts to address potential problems before they happened

After careful consideration of Smart Net Total Care that included a thorough security evaluation to ensure that Aon's proprietary network information would be protected, and gaining buy-in from its operating units in each of the Asia-Pacific countries that would be affected by use of the solution, Aon decided to standardize its installed base management process across the business region using a combination of Smart Net Total Care.

Results

With Smart Net Total Care now deployed, Aon IT teams throughout the Asia-Pacific region are regularly accessing the solution's portal to determine the status of their inventory, which includes highly detailed information on each network device, contract status, and possible product alerts. Timely, validated information means less time is spent troubleshooting issues and, when detected, the issues are resolved more quickly. Aon estimates that by eliminating the need for reconciling inventory manually using multiple spreadsheets, the company will save a minimum of one month of employee time per year.

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Previously, when a country operating unit added, moved, or otherwise changed a device on the network, the headquarters' IT team lacked visibility. With all network information now consolidated in the Smart Net Total Care portal, headquarters staff uses it as the central location for determining what has changed, where it has changed and when. This helps reduce duplication of coverage and, more importantly, ensures that all devices have the proper service entitlement.

As a result, Aon has been able to construct a new change management process based on the reporting capabilities of Smart Net Total Care. For example, when a voice gateway went down in the Philippines, the operations team was able to quickly locate the entitlement information using the portal prior to contacting the Cisco Technical Assistance Center (TAC), quickly advise the TAC of the status upon calling them, and expedite a replacement.

Another area where Smart Net Total Care has played an effective operational role has been in simplifying Aon's service contract management. The 90 contracts that existed prior to the introduction of Smart Net Total Care have been reduced by more than half to 40 service agreements. The goal is to reduce this number even further. Fewer contracts mean considerable time savings due to easier administration.

Looking ahead, Aon plans to enable Cisco Smart Call Home capabilities that come standard with Smart Net Total Care. Smart Call Home uses a proactive service approach to avoid network downtime by enabling network devices to perform diagnostics on their own components, and then provides real-time alerts or remediation advice when an issue is detected so problems can be avoided.

With Smart Net Total Care now firmly established as the foundation for Aon's installed base management process, the increased visibility provided by Smart Net Total Care is helping the company do what it does best: better manage risk by helping it better manage its network.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Smart Net Total Care, go to:
www.cisco.com/go/total

And to learn more about Aon Australia, visit:
http://www.aon.com.au/australia/default.jsp

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