

Environmental Nonprofit Eases Network Maintenance

Customer Case Study



Altus Consulting helps Organization for Tropical Studies ensure network uptime with Cisco Smart Care Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS)

Industry: Nonprofit

Location: San José, Costa Rica

Number of Employees: 200

Challenge:

- Allow collaboration and data transmission between distant research sites and campuses
- Help ensure that network is connected 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Ease contract administration, while improving network security and visibility

Solution:

- Cisco Smart Care Service gives Altus Consulting single view of all OTS network devices
- Altus Consulting's Smart Connect combines Cisco Smart Care with its own support center
- Both OTS and Altus Consulting gain better quality information about network

Results:

- Accelerated network problem resolution
- Enhanced competitive edge, while furthering environmental commitment
- Reduced risk of network failure, allowing research and education to be conducted worry-free

Challenge

Founded in 1963, the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) is a nonprofit consortium that provides leadership in education, research, and the responsible use of natural resources in the tropics. OTS consists of more than 60 universities and research institutions from the United States, Latin America, and Australia that work collaboratively to facilitate research and conserve tropical rainforests. The organization also maintains three biological stations in Costa Rica, which is where OTS is headquartered, and conducts graduate and undergraduate environmental education.

More than 300 scientists from 24 countries work at OTS' research sites per year, and they rely on the organization's Cisco network to capture and send information from its biological stations in the forest to research campuses worldwide. "We have scientists who work in the forests that depend on our network to send back the data they collect," says Oscar Madrigal, information management coordinator at OTS. "Alternately, we have scientists who don't come to Costa Rica, but are analyzing the data remotely through the Internet, so we need to stay connected 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Thus, OTS' partnership with Altus Consulting plays a critical role in helping ensure that research and communication can proceed without problems or delay. A Cisco partner since 2007, Altus provides expertise in a range of IT services, including network engineering and design, systems engineering, and systems integration and training. OTS has worked with Altus since 2007, not only because of the competency of its staff, but for its commitment to OTS' mission. "Altus fully understands how our organization works and what we need from a technology perspective," says Madrigal. "But more than that, they are committed to the mission of the institution. I consider Altus my right hand in everything that has to do with networks and security."



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Rafael Campos
Co-founder and product manager
Altus Consulting

So when Altus recommended the Cisco® Smart Care Service to assist in network maintenance and enhancing network performance, Madrigal and team were ready to listen. “We had been using Cisco SMARTnet to manage our contracts, but were looking to ease that process, and also gain more visibility and security for our network. Altus recommended migrating to Cisco Smart Care so they can proactively work on our network and, in case of a problem, they can instantly fix it,” says Madrigal. “We felt we already had the right Cisco hardware to ensure our network will work 24 hours a day. We were mainly looking for the insight and device information that would ensure uptime, and supplement the great service we were already receiving from Altus.”

Solution

It did not take much convincing to get OTS signed up for Cisco Smart Care, or more specifically, the service that Altus branded as Smart Connect. “Altus Smart Connect is a service that we market as a joint Cisco and Altus product,” says Rafael Campos, co-founder and product manager at Altus Consulting. “We use Cisco Smart Care as a base offering that includes smart service capabilities for proactive network assessments, remote software repairs, and technical support. Then we layer our own value-added support center on top of it.”

The Altus support center provides customers with technical help through phone, email, and an online portal. This portal acts as a centralized mechanism for support-case control, allowing the customer to report a case, track status, and receive daily or hourly reports depending on the urgency of the case. “For us, Cisco Smart Care gave us the perfect opportunity to package our support center and other services together with Cisco products,” says Campos. “Before, we had to do it separately, offering clients a Cisco SMARTnet proposal for repairing and another from Altus for everything else. We like Smart Care because it allows us to offer clients different services under a single contract.”

This single contract makes life easier for both Altus and OTS, and it helps both parties gain better quality information about the network. As Campos explains, when Altus was selling Cisco SMARTnet® contracts, the firm did not have any visibility of OTS’ network, so if a problem were to occur, it was harder to respond with a solution. “In contrast,” says Campos, “with Cisco Smart Care, we have a very detailed view of the OTS network, so that if there is a problem, it’s much easier and faster to go fix it.”

Results

By working with Altus and using its Cisco Smart Care-based Smart Connect service, the IT team at OTS is seeing various benefits, including more efficient problem resolution and better quality of information. However, Madrigal points out, “It’s important to be clear that technology doesn’t work by itself in any area of knowledge. It will depend on people’s aptitudes and attitudes to get it going, and that’s something that Altus has: a real commitment and consciousness toward the environmental issues that OTS is focused on.”

Madrigal also believes that working with Altus and leveraging the Cisco Smart Care Service helps OTS gain a competitive edge over similar programs and strengthen its environmental commitment. “I make it very clear to the organization that not having this type of service constitutes a risk for us,” he says. “There’s the risk of our network going down and us not being able to conduct our geographically scattered studies, nor collaborate overseas. So I definitely think we gain an advantage by working with Altus and leveraging Smart Connect, because if it wasn’t for them, we’d be at constant risk.”

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Information management coordinator
Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS)

Next Steps

Looking ahead, OTS plans to continue using the Altus Smart Connect service, while looking for guidance on a new network modernization project on the horizon. “Our network is made up almost entirely of Cisco equipment,” says Madrigal. “So we’re considering working with Cisco and Altus to obtain the resources needed to modernize our La Selva Biological Station. Whatever new projects lie ahead, Altus Smart Connect will definitely provide the support we need to ensure a robust, secure, and reliable network to further our environmental initiatives.”

For More Information

- To learn more about Cisco Smart Care Service, visit: www.cisco.com/go/smartcare.

Services List

Altus Services

- Altus Smart Connect Service

Cisco Services

- Cisco Smart Care Service
- Cisco SMARTnet Service



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