Heavy Equipment Leader Lightens Time for Network Operations

WesTrac chooses Cisco Smart Net Total Care for more efficient device lifecycle management.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WesTrac
· South Guildford, Australia

Business Challenge
· Reduce time and cost of manual IB management process
· Optimize IT resources
· Provide for device lifecycle management

Network Solution
· Cisco Smart Net Total Care (SNTC)

Business Results
· Better protection against network risk via greater IB visibility
· Weeks of productivity gained annually
· Better management control of vendor contracts and relations for improved SLAs

For over 20 years WesTrac has set the benchmark in equipment management, providing customers across Western Australia, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern provinces of China with award-winning support across the mining, construction, and transport industries.

As one of the largest authorized Caterpillar dealers in the world, WesTrac provides customers with a wide array of machinery and construction equipment, as well as a comprehensive equipment lifecycle management solutions designed to make owning and operating equipment as easy, profitable, and safe as possible – from selection and finance through to maintenance and resale.

With over 3000 staff nationally and nearly 300 apprentices enrolled in its accredited training institute, WesTrac is dedicated to creating and delivering outstanding value for its employees, customers, shareholders, and the community. Its branch network represents over 50 locations throughout Australia -- including remote mining areas that tend to be far from anywhere – and provides expansive warehouse facilities, service depots, and onsite service operations. Helping ensure that the company's equipment is properly positioned and serviced, and that customer expectations are met across its diverse geography of operations, is a sophisticated IT network.

Business Challenge:
Save Me Time and Trouble

Managing a far-flung network in hard-to-reach places carries special challenges, especially when IT resources are limited. If a device fails at a remote mining location, it may be difficult to physically assess the problem on-site and provide a timely replacement if needed. Moreover, in a dynamic network environment, devices are often redeployed. If devices are not tracked properly, replacement issues are a constant concern; the problem is compounded if devices aren't readily available or are warehoused at the wrong location.

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A WesTrac network engineer

Typically, WesTrac hardware failures needed to be manually monitored by a network engineer. When a device failed, the engineer would then need to create a Return Materials Authorization (RMA) on his own.

This was only one example of where the lack of detailed device inventory information was contributing to a lack of proper service coverage, higher operating costs, and less-than-optimal use of IT resources – both people and budget. WesTrac needed a more efficient, accurate way of improving lifecycle management for its entire inventory of Cisco network equipment, which consists of over 6000 devices in its core network and more than 7000 additional devices for communication and collaboration requirements.

Cisco Solution:
Smart Net Total Care Automates Device Lifecycle Management

Understanding the company's unique business requirements, Cisco introduced the WesTrac IT team to Cisco® Smart Net Total Care (SNTC). SNTC provides a single service delivery solution, including contract management, foundational technical services, and device diagnostics powered by Cisco Smart Call Home — plus security and other alert notifications for Cisco products. Using its ability for detailed discovery of Cisco branded network devices, SNTC offers actionable intelligence and proactive support capabilities that could help WesTrac reduce operating costs, minimize downtime, and avoid network risk.

WesTrac quickly saw the potential benefits of Smart Net Total Care based on its ability to automate manual tasks while also providing network visibility that had previously been lacking. The service was deployed in a matter of a few weeks, and WesTrac began seeing measurable improvements in better maintaining their inventory shortly thereafter.

Business Outcome:
Greater Network Visibility Yields Greater Management Results

For WesTrac, all SNTC benefits begin with increased network visibility to detailed device information. Security alerts are one example. With the ability to view Cisco alerts and easily associate them with specific devices using SNTC reporting capabiliites, the company can decide where to best place resources to avoid network risk. In addition to this visibility, SNTC offers the added advantage of being able to see specific devices that may lack a service contract. Thus WesTrac can further help ensure against risk by adding service coverage where required.

Improved network maintenance has also meant improvements in the use of IT staff time. For example, two hours per week has been saved on inventory reconciliation. Weeks of personnel hours have been gained in productivity annually through better interaction with the Cisco Technical Assistance Center (TAC), thanks to the detailed device data and history provided by Smart Net Total Care at the time of the call to help accelerate problem resolution. Even better, with the time saved, WesTrac engineers can now devote more resources to other essential IT projects, such as converged infrastructure, wireless upgrades, and IP security.

To further protect its network from risk, WesTrac decided to use the device diagnostics capabilities that are built into Smart Net Total Care for a number of its core network devices. Powered by Cisco Smart Call Home, the device diagnostics feature of SNTC uses a proactive service approach to avoid network downtime by enabling network

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A WesTrac infrastructure manager

devices to perform diagnostics on their own components. It then automatically provides real-time alerts or remediation advice to the company when an issue is detected.

As noted, a key goal for WesTrac in standardizing on SNTC for device lifecycle management was to reduce the time pressure on IT staff, which was constantly multi-tasking. It's succeeding. Previously the company manually worked from purchasing reports to track active devices. Now, with timelier, accurate data automatically provided by SNTC, the process is measurably faster.

A WesTrac network engineer, expresses the added efficiencies realized using SNTC well, "With the time savings provided by Smart Net Total Care, we are now spending more time on other important endeavors. Knowing that our network housekeeping is done has helped us focus on optimizing the network design and mentoring the graduates of our training program."

With greater IT flexibility gained in using Smart Net Total Care has also come greater control, especially as it pertains to tendering contracts to the company's outside network management partners. Having an extensive, shared view of the WesTrac installed base gives partners more confidence in the quality of the network information and has contributed to greater responsiveness on their behalf and more accurate quotes for service level delivery.

Describing the company's improvements in vendor management, a WesTrac infrastructure manager, says, "We have realized numerous benefits in using Smart Net Total Care that weren't available using our previous inventory method. For example, we can better assess network risk using alerts, we have simplified inventory management, and we're able to generate reports on request and respond to network problems faster. We're also better positioned to drive competitive tendering of our vendor maintenance contracts. Working with local partners, network visibility helps us generate more accurate quotes in negotiating multi-year deals."

For a company that helps to literally move mountains for its customers, the WesTrac IT team has found a way to move and manage a mountain of network information for their own company more efficiently than ever before using Cisco Smart Net Total Care. Less time is now wasted on low value-add activities such as reporting and collating information. And, as a consequence, more valuable time is now being invested in planning, running, and optimizing the network for business advantage.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Smart Net Total Care Service, please visit the SNTC online community: http://tinyurl.com/mmst5jd

And to learn more about WesTrac, please visit: http://www.westrac.com.au/Pages/default.aspx

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