

Removing the pain of a WOC rollout

Introduction

Organizations of all sizes are centralizing access to their business critical services, (Exchange, CRM solutions, enterprise-web applications...), with a view to more efficient use of IT resources - ensuring data freshness, increasing security measures, improving scalability, providing higher availability and instant access to executive reports. As these core services become more centralized, customer services are becoming more decentralized with branch offices in different locations to meet greater customer expectations in a more competitive market.

Many companies spend millions of dollars rolling out centralized network services, usually in the head office, only to find that they become almost unusable for branch office, home and mobile users. WAN Optimization Controller products (WOCs) allow organizations to reduce the effects of high latency and lower bandwidth links by employing techniques to reduce protocol chatter, compressing data and network caching. Typical WOC solutions however do throw up new problems:

- Traditional WOC products generally involve hardware installations; both near the content servers and in branch offices. This can result in dozens or hundreds of hardware installs for each deployment - massively increasing network management costs. They also may not provide a solution for smaller offices as additional hardware is either prohibitively expensive or difficult to manage effectively. Home workers and mobile workers often cannot be catered for.
- Traditional hardware based WOC products behave as a transparent proxy, tunneling all traffic between offices. They function as a central point through which all office traffic flows, thereby introducing the risk of widespread loss of service when WOC related issues occur.

The Problem

A local enterprise with a global presence made a decision that performance levels for remote workers was not acceptable. Every office outside of the 300 mile radius from headquarters frequently complained that it took considerable time each morning to get their email, spin up critical workflow applications and begin the serious work of the day. Not only was effective communication and real business delayed, but the fact that web based applications and file transfers proved slow meant that employees were reluctant to use them. The result was a lack of up-to-date and accurate management information required to effectively drive the business on a day to day basis. Perhaps more importantly, strategic decisions were being based on inaccurate or incomplete competitive information – a paradigm for failure.

The IT department was tasked with creating a lab simulation of the network conditions which they believed were experienced across the organization. They were shocked at what they saw and agreed that unless a solution was put in place, the business (at worst case) would stagnate rather than grow as predicted – they had identified a critical bottleneck. The IT manager was aware of the potential benefits of using a WAN optimization solution. He trialed an available solution and recorded the upside effects for his management team. They were suitably impressed with what they saw and took the decision to roll it out as quickly as possible. They agreed to buy several dozen hardware appliances and wanted to get them installed, starting with the most distant location first. Flights and hotels were booked and the installation team began their “world tour”, training the local IT staff as they went, each of whom in turn embarked on their own installation tours for their local geographies.

Making the decision to deploy turned out to be the easy part. Some machines didn't arrive on time while others didn't boot when they arrived because of transportation problems. Some machines arrived fully functional, but couldn't be deployed because the office had a new firewall which the IT team didn't think would be a problem – and this office only had 11 people in it! The IT team had to engage hardware experts from the WAN Optimization company. They had to fly out, resolve hardware problems and give additional training to local IT support technicians. This continued with the cost increasing each day, no installation completed, regular IT work mounting, over budget and underperforming. The result was a de-motivated, frustrated workforce.

Unfortunately home workers, the mobile sales force and very small offices could not be catered for.

Ultimately... expensive, time consuming, risky and exclusive. **Hard work!**

The Solution

Another very similar local enterprise, again with a global presence was also suffering the same WAN related issues. As part of their trial process they contacted their local hardware reseller and arranged to get a hardware based solution as soon as possible. The reseller, seeing the potential for a deal was very responsive, and guaranteed to get the hardware to them within 3 weeks. At the same time they contacted Replify, were immediately sent the software containing a REPTOR Virtual Appliance and Client. They had a trial version of the REPTOR within the hour.

The IT team, seeing the massive benefits of virtualization several months before had already started to virtualize their data center. It took them a half an hour to install the latest REPTOR Virtual Appliance and configure it for the three application servers which were causing most pain for their remote users: i.e. Exchange, CRM and SharePoint. The REPTOR Virtual Appliance was now in the *live* network, but critically, unlike typical solutions, not behaving as a transparent proxy but instead as simply a service on the network.

A few minutes later they emailed John in Singapore as they knew that he would be keen to act as a test candidate for any solution that could make him more productive. John consistently showed the most frustration at not being able to use the centralized applications effectively. As expected, John responded positively. The IT team who were conducting the trial, using LANDesk, pushed out the REPTOR Client to John's Windows XP laptop in the remote office. His laptop was installed with a preconfigured WOC Client end point within a few minutes. As the final step in the install, the REPTOR Client connected into the REPTOR Virtual Appliance at headquarters which instantaneously pushed out the rules to intercept the traffic for the three provisioned applications. By looking at the REPTOR's Virtual Appliance Management GUI, the IT guys at headquarters could see that he was connected and, before John rang them to report his findings; they could tell that he was seeing significant benefits through massive compression gains and the bi-directional network caching, (XDR™).

At this point, John was the only person in the company (>1,500) using the solution as only he had an installed REPTOR Client. As he was the only person in the company going through the REPTOR Virtual Appliance to access these business critical applications, he was therefore the only person at risk if any deployment related issues arose.

After John had been connected for a few days, the rest of the remote office team started to ask for the install. They were updated together with a preconfigured client, again using LANDesk, and soon they were all much happier. Over the next week a volunteer was chosen from an office in each of the 5 other APAC offices. As each of these volunteers nodded their approval the whole of the region was brought on line in a controlled manner and with minimal risk.

In parallel to the branch office roll out, all home and mobile workers were furnished with a REPTOR Client which allowed them to optimize these applications regardless of their location or connection type. It was a great success.

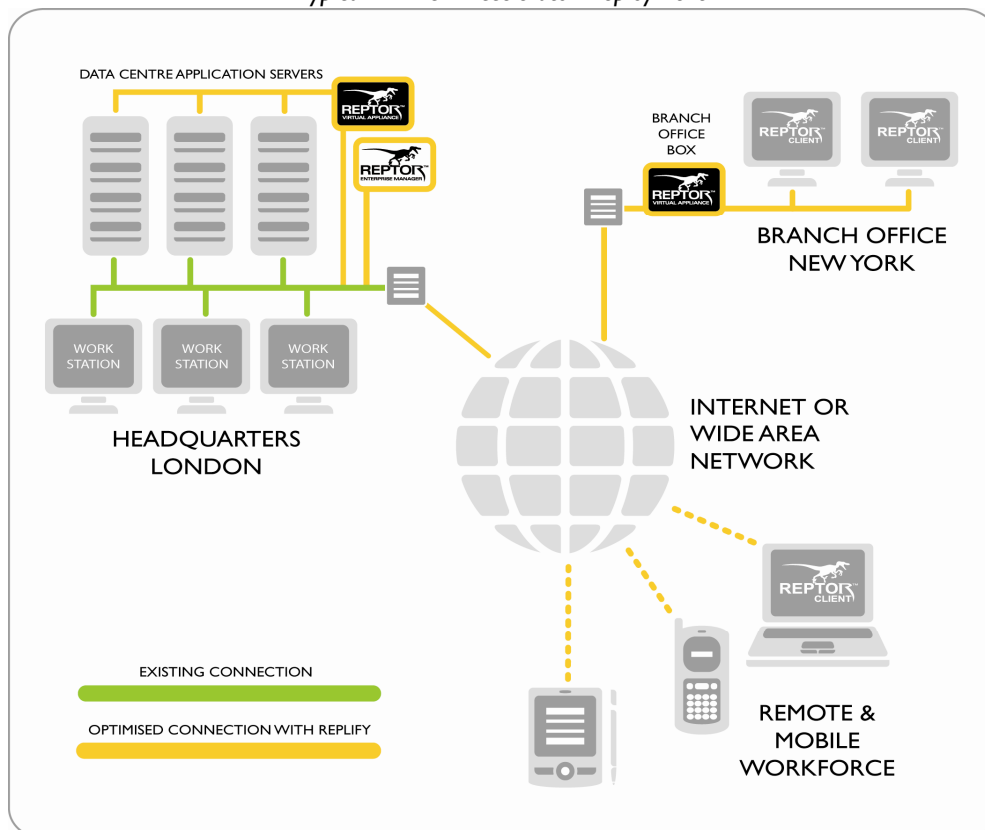
At this point it became clear to the IT team that the REPTOR Accelerator was the solution for them. After a short consultation with the reseller they decided that it would be appropriate to put a virtual appliance in several of the larger branch offices to take advantage of a larger shared cache and significant WAN offload. As each of these larger branches had at the very least some IT expertise, it was a painless task to identify a host machine on each site, install VMware Server, import the REPTOR Virtual Appliance image and carry out some simple configuration (i.e. give the machine an IP address). After that, the main IT team was again able to control the configuration and flow of incoming and outbound traffic using the REPTOR Enterprise Manager.

The REPTOR Enterprise Manager is a Virtual Appliance which allows abstraction of the complex business of configuring and reporting application acceleration for a large network. As the user describes the network using the intuitive REPTOR Enterprise Manager GUI, the configuration is instantaneously rippled out to all interested components in the network.

Using the advanced client level reporting, IT had a clearer picture of application usage than they ever had before.

Affordable, fast, controlled and completely inclusive. **Easy!**

Typical REPTOR Accelerator Deployment



Conclusion

As global companies modernize, they are becoming increasingly focused on agility and the ability to provide capacity to every employee in a fair and consistent manner. It is often the smallest offices in the farthest reaches that are experiencing the most pain. It is just not feasible to install and, (usually more importantly), support hardware in each and every office which has only a handful of support or sales people with little or no IT expertise.

By allowing every employee in a company to avail of WOC optimizations regardless of bandwidth, latency and location, Replify believe that the REPTOR Accelerator is the most complete product available today.

Fast Rollout

You can download and trial this stuff today. The REPTOR Accelerator is 100% Virtual – no waiting for hardware. Feel free to trial a Client and Virtual Appliance deployment today!

Risk Free Rollout

IT may rollout one client at a time. This means that you can trial in a live network with just a single client.

Trialing and deploying is seamlessly combined. As the REPTOR Virtual Appliance is NOT transparent, the appliance only sees relevant traffic. If an appliance was to become unavailable for some reason, the system fails back onto the existing non-optimized network conditions.

Affordable

Replify do not differentiate between Client and Virtual Appliance (either DC or Branch) installs so there is no extra cost involved in spinning up a new Virtual Appliance. Because we only ship software, we can scale with businesses of all sizes.

Pricing is fixed by license blocks, relevant to the number of concurrent users in the system.

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