

Transaction Services Provider Network Resource Manager – NRM

Transaction Services Provider Keeps Tight Control of an Expansive Network Inventory with Visionael® NRM

Every day, billions of purchases are made with credit and debit cards—such an ingrained part of daily commerce that the average consumer doesn't think twice about the technology behind the transaction. But, to this Transaction Services Provider, the speed and accuracy with which that transaction can occur are of utmost importance. It is one of the world's leading providers of fast, reliable data communications services for transaction-oriented applications; its original and largest line of business offers circuit connections from retail points of sale (POS) to credit or debit card processors. The company delivers a range of authorization and communications solutions, processing more than 30 million transactions globally through its four service divisions: Point-of-Services, Telecom Services, Financial Services and International Systems. To keep its infrastructure and business running at peak efficiency, the Transaction Services Provider relies on network inventory management solutions provided by Visionael® Network Resource Manager (NRM).

"Our network has to deliver extreme reliability; the nation's economy literally depends on it," says the Transaction Services Provider's Director of OSS Applications. The company was founded more than 15 years ago and "historically, our value-add is that we process transactions very quickly, with minimal latency, to allow for very fast response," he says.

"To maximize customer satisfaction and our profitability, we need extremely accurate information on how circuits are being used. Visionael NRM gives us exactly what we require."

Visionael enables granular network inventory to be taken

The Director has been an enthusiastic Visionael user since 1998. When he joined the Transaction Services Provider in 2001 the network team chose Visionael to address an unwieldy and growing challenge: circuit inventory. "Inventory is at the heart of our business. If we don't know what's on the network, we can't be certain that we can deliver what we promise," he says. In 1998, the company was in dire need of replacing its previous circuit inventory system, built in an Informix database more than a decade old. "The Informix system was not scalable. The majority of the fields were free text and were not used consistently. You had to be an old-timer with the company to understand what the data meant."

After deploying Visionael, more than 30,000 records from the Informix database were migrated into Visionael, allowing the Director and his team to start tracking circuits based on the associated customer. "One of the big issues we had was not knowing how much the

Industry/market:

Transaction Services

The Network Environment:

A worldwide network with 70 POPs in the US, primarily built with Cisco Systems equipment.

The Challenge:

To accurately inventory an expansive infrastructure with more than 300,000 network objects. Precise inventory information is required across the company, affecting departments from network planning to billing.

The Solution:

The Transaction Services Provider chose Visionael NRM, a comprehensive software solution that allows it to gain an accurate, extremely granular inventory of critical network resources.

The Benefits:

Accurate network inventory helps assure the Transaction Services Provider that it can maintain high performance levels system-wide, while operating at maximum efficiency.

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circuits cost, or how to apportion backbone-related connectivity versus customer-specific connectivity. We needed a system that would enable us to track circuits by division, so we could in turn track customer-specific usage,” he recalls.

NRM enables accurate accounting of network assets

For example, with Visionael the Director can track which channels of a T1 circuit are being used by customers in the company’s various divisions (Point-of-Service, Telecommunications Services, etc.) This helps to break down the real costs of the T1 circuit and factor it into customer charges. It also improves billing reconciliation; in the past, a disconnect between the Transaction Service Provider’s billing department and its accounts payable group (which receives the bills from the telecommunications providers) had made it difficult to reconcile actual costs with invoiced amounts. “In both of these situations, data consistency is imperative,” the Director says. “To maximize customer satisfaction and our profitability, we need extremely accurate information on how circuits are being used. Visionael NRM gives us exactly what we require.”

On an ongoing basis, the Transaction Services Provider uses NRM to document its production network, which contains more than 300,000 network objects, as well as backbone circuits, and SS7 links. “We are tracking all of the locations where we have circuits terminate,” he explains. “Visionael NRM follows all the equipment in our 70 points of presence [POPs] across the US. And we use it to track the logical customer circuits and the complex physical circuits that lay beneath.”

Value-added flexibility

The Transaction Services Provider has extended NRM’s functionality to perform additional invaluable tasks. The circuit table in the Visionael solution has been expanded to accommodate custom fields that are used to track related circuits. The Director’s team has also implemented a custom DLL, creating custom tabs on the circuit interface and the location of the properties interface to further streamline circuit management. Numerous custom fields have been built into the application to allow logistics and field operations teams to use it to track additional relevant details.

The Director summarizes, “Having Visionael NRM in place ensures data consistency and coherent use of the tracking fields, our number-one priority in the inventory area. With NRM, we have been far more efficient with network planning and billing, thanks to the reliable inventory data we now have.”

Epilogue:

Since deploying Visionael NRM in 2001, the Transaction Services Provider was able to retire its decade-old Informix-based network inventory system. NRM provides robust inventory capabilities that are used standalone by a wide range of departments; it also integrates with critical applications such as Oracle Financials and BMC Remedy Action Request System (ARS). The Director of OSS Applications at the Transaction Services Provider says, “Having Visionael NRM in place ensures data consistency and coherent use of the tracking fields, our number-one priority in the inventory area. With NRM, we have been far more efficient with network planning and billing, thanks to the reliable inventory data we now have.”

Customer Profile:

The Transaction Services Provider is one of the world’s leading providers of fast, reliable data communications services for transaction-oriented applications. It combines innovation, advanced technology and industry expertise to provide a range of authorization and communications solutions to support the transactions industry. Founded in 1990, the provider has built and operates a communications network focused on the needs of point-of-sale transaction processing and other transaction-centric industries around the world.

Visionael Corporation, a privately-held company, enables IT professionals to more effectively manage their networks. Visionael solutions empower large enterprises, government agencies, outsourcers and service providers to discover, design, deploy, provision, and operate mission-critical networks.

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