Health First Replaces Manpower Hours with an Automated, High-Availability, and Insightful Alternative

THE CUSTOMER - HEALTH FIRST

On Florida's Space Coast, Health First is the face of healthcare.

Three not-for-profit hospitals—Cape Canaveral Hospital in Cocoa Beach, Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne, and Palm Bay Community Hospital in Palm Bay—form the core of Health First's family in Brevard County. In addition, 60 clinics provide care throughout the region.

A small team of network engineers maintains consistency across all locations and approximately 7,000 network devices.

"We're moving toward being paperless at every site, so uptime is essential for accessing medical records," said Mark Davidson, Senior Network Engineer. "We don't have a lot of time to check ourselves. We have to make every minute count when we work. If someone leaves something out of a configuration, then the switch will act differently and impact uptime."

THE CHALLENGE

Modernizing Processes to Eliminate Manual Work

Inevitably, the team lacked the manpower to check all configurations manually, especially with frequent changes such as new clinics and services. "A lot of our time was tied up in being reactive, instead of proactive," Davidson said.

THE SOLUTION

A Simple, Quick, Intuitive Solution for Managing 7,000 Devices

Davidson recalled learning about NetMRI at VoiceCon. The solution enables IT staff to maintain consistent configurations across all devices and quickly identify and solve potential issues with routing, subnets, VoIP, VLANs, and other areas.

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>
> **Mark Davidson**
> **Senior Network Engineer**
> **Health First**

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Health First also chose to implement the Policy Management Module and IP Telephony for Cisco. The Policy Management Module automatically detects configuration changes and deviations from policy, allowing Health First to ensure that configurations stay consistent with company and industry best practices.

IP Telephony for Cisco automates data collection across the entire infrastructure, proactively simplifying voice management, improving service quality, and reducing risk.

Within an hour of taking NetMRI out of the box, Davidson had it up and running on his own. Use of the solution proved likewise simple for the entire team. "The product is so straightforward. It's intuitive, so we have not needed any training so far."

THE RESULT

Improvements in Uptime in an Uptime-Critical Environment

Previously, engineers assessed the configurations of individual network devices by hand. With NetMRI, Health First automates the process of evaluating devices for configuration consistency. The solution scans the network every night and reports on any changes.Network engineers begin their days by looking at the network scorecard in NetMRI, which provides a high-level view of overall network performance. They can then drill down for more detail on any issues.

As IT staff go about their days, NetMRI continuously gathers data and remains on the lookout for changes. The team receives alerts, allowing them to troubleshoot issues immediately.

NetMRI also automatically restores configurations according to Health First's standards. To date, the solution has proven very valuable in several situations where switches failed. NetMRI retains those configurations, allowing the team to restore them as needed.

"Before, we would have restored configurations manually or someone would need more training to use another product. That's too much work," Davidson said.

At anytime, the staff can run real-time or historical reports on general performance or specific aspects. Davidson regularly provides a link to show the department head the status of the network. The team also looks at historical data to identify trends, and then, takes steps to proactively protect the network to avoid incidents.

At once, NetMRI enables the Health First team to be more proactive, while also reducing the amount of time staff spend maintaining configurations. "NetMRI is the first place we go when we discover something is acting up," Davidson said. "It quickly provides more detail about the devices involved. In some cases, that has saved us a few hours of diagnosis time."

Customer: **Health First**
Industry: **Healthcare**
Location: **Rockledge, Florida**

OBJECTIVES

- Increase efficiency for the small IT team
- Eliminate manual work
- Guarantee consistent uptime

RESULTS:

- Automation of device configuration and restoration
- Reduction in diagnosis time and overall downtime
- Replacement of additional headcount by less expensive network solution
- New proactive mindset across IT

PRODUCTS:

- NetMRI

The level of automation also impresses Davidson, even down to filling out "Help" emails that automatically go to Infoblox. "You buy this tool to save you time and it continues to do so," he said.

Without NetMRI, Davidson feels the small team would otherwise have needed to grow to meet demand and frequent organization change. "NetMRI is that other person on the team, which costs considerably less than adding another person," he said.Most significantly, the Health First team notes downtime decreases in this uptime- critical environment. "Uptime has definitely improved with NetMRI," Davidson said. "Since acquiring NetMRI three years ago, we have not had any configuration- related events."

Looking ahead, the organization expects to improve the quality if its Voice-over- Internet Protocol network with the IP Telephony for Cisco module. IT staff are proactively alerted about issues and can then access detailed information to identify the source of problems.

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