

ALSTOM UK uses Observer® for network monitoring and troubleshooting

The leading company for equipment and services for power generation and rail transport uses Network Instruments® Observer technology and Advanced Probe Appliances in the UK for fast local and remote problem resolution and efficient monitoring

ALSTOM is a major worldwide player in equipment and services for power generation and rail transport. They have a strong presence in the UK with over 40 sites located all around the country. IT Centre UK Network Manager Chris Reynolds is in charge of the network management and security across the different sites. With a managed LAN on most key sites, linking onto an extensive managed WAN using a single MPLS cloud, and complex applications running on the network, Reynolds has a challenging task.

Several products were used to monitor the network, but with various application problems occurring, a more comprehensive and reliable solution was required for continuous troubleshooting, and monitoring bandwidth and network usage. Reynolds also desired a solution that could perform usage and behaviour analysis. Reynolds compared several network management tools, including Observer from Network Instruments.

Observer's remote monitoring capabilities immediately drew Reynolds' attention. Built on a unique distributed network analysis architecture, the Observer product family combines a comprehensive management console with high-performance probes to provide integrated monitoring and management for the entire network.

"Observer is in a league of its own," said Reynolds. "Its combined distributed architecture, remote analysis capabilities, powerful features and functionality provides for a more comprehensive tool than any other product--all for a very sensible cost."

With numerous sites across the country, it is vital to obtain visibility both locally and on remote segments of the network to ensure good performance. The Observer console includes a local probe for local analysis and connects to remote probes for real-time remote monitoring. By installing hardware and software probes at major sites, Reynolds has gained this crucial visibility. He can easily access data collected on the remote segments from his central Observer console.

"Visibility is the key to resolving issues," explains Reynolds. "With Observer Suite and the Multi-Probe appliances installed at different locations, I can look at the network in real-time and offer diagnostics using the same tool, for faster problem resolution at our key sites."

From his local console, Reynolds can set up a local or remote probe to collect and store data for long-term trending and analysis. He can also view and analyse Internet traffic over time with Observer's Internet Trending capabilities. Reynolds is therefore able to assess network usage and define traffic patterns in the long term.

"While I'm doing other tasks, I know Observer is collecting network traffic and generating statistics, allowing me to review overall network health over time," said Reynolds. "With Observer, I can be proactive when managing the network because I know what happens. For instance, I can identify traffic usage and upgrade the network accordingly to avoid saturation."

On all corporate networks, problems can occur sporadically. With probes already installed on the network, Reynolds can benefit from Observer's powerful troubleshooting abilities immediately. Observer's Expert Analysis flags issues so Reynolds can easily identify what needs to be done to solve the problem.

"Before, it could take two days to go and install an analyser at the right location when an issue struck," said Reynolds. "With Observer, I can perform full diagnostics immediately because I already have a probe in place collecting data. Whether we have high traffic usage or an application problem at the packet level, I can identify what the issue is."

Reynolds and his team utilise Observer to ensure ALSTOM staff do not suffer interruption in their jobs due to network problems. This allows Reynolds confidence in day-to-day network operations and allows ALSTOM to continue to set the benchmark for innovative, environmentally friendly technologies around the world.

"With Observer, we can be proactive in our approach," said Reynolds. "We are not constantly fire-fighting. We optimise network performance and resolve network issues faster. For the company, it means the network doesn't stop business operations."

Network Instruments, despite having become one of the established leaders in the network analysis market, still maintains an open dialogue with its customers. Reynolds contacted the Network Instruments European office with comments and suggestions after having installed the product on his network.

In summary...

About ALSTOM

As a world leader in energy and transport infrastructure, ALSTOM delivers innovative products and services for power generation and rail transport in over 70 countries. In Europe, the company is well known for the excellent reputation of the TGV™ trains in France and high-speed regional Pendolino™ trains for Virgin Trains in the UK. Recently, ALSTOM won a contract worth more than 400 million euros to build a turnkey combined-cycle power plant in southwest England. More information is available at www.alstom.com.

Challenge

With numerous ALSTOM sites across the UK and complex applications running across the network, IT Centre UK Network Manager Chris Reynolds needed a distributed monitoring and effective troubleshooting solution to obtain visibility into remote network segments.

Solution

After reviewing several products, Reynolds chose the Observer technology including Advanced Hardware Multi-Probes by Network Instruments, thus gaining the distributed visibility and troubleshooting capabilities needed to resolve network issues and ensure minimal downtime.

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**Chris Reynolds
Network Manager
ALSTOM UK**

"It is nice to be able to have a dialogue with the vendor of a solution I am using on my network," said Reynolds. "Network Instruments is not complacent and I could see that they continuously work with their customers to ensure the quality and adequacy of their products."

Reynolds has been able to see the value brought by the Network Instruments' solution. A network analyser used in a proactive manner brings tremendous advantages to any company.

"We have seen a real benefit on the sites where we have installed Network Instruments software or hardware probes," said Reynolds. "Observer is an essential tool to run daily operations. We are planning to equip most of our sites over time so we can benefit across the whole organisation."

About Network Instruments

Network Instruments provides in-depth network intelligence and continuous network availability through innovative analysis solutions. Enterprise network professionals depend on Network Instruments' Observer product line for unparalleled network visibility to efficiently solve network problems and manage deployments. By combining a powerful management console with high-performance analysis appliances, Observer simplifies problem resolution and optimises network and application performance. The company continues to lead the industry in ROI with its advanced Distributed Network Analysis (NI-DNA™) architecture, which successfully integrates comprehensive analysis functionality across heterogeneous networks through a single monitoring interface. Network Instruments is headquartered in Minneapolis with sales offices worldwide and distributors in over 50 countries. For more information about the company, products, technology, NI-DNA, becoming a partner, and NI University please visit www.networkinstruments.co.uk

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Chris Reynolds

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