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Nectar CMP Eases, Expedites Microsoft Lync Adoption

BY PAULA BERNIER

Microsoft Lync is spreading like wildfire.

Lync is experiencing strong double-digit growth across all regions and verticals, even in traditionally conservative verticals such as financial services and health care, notes Tom Tuttle, vice president of the Microsoft practice at Nectar, which provides advanced software solutions to manage unified communications networks.

Licenses for Lync grew more than 25 percent worldwide last year, and research published by T3i Group in June 2014 says that of the more than 300 domestic enterprises and small and medium businesses it surveyed, 72 percent of the U.S. enterprises were either conducting or had completed trials of Microsoft Lync. That represents a giant leap compared to the 42 percent of such businesses that were in that position the year prior.

Businesses of all sizes are embracing Lync – soon to be rebranded Skype for Business – to enjoy its return on investment, its integration of voice with other popular Microsoft applications, its broad collaboration capabilities, its intuitive user interface, and its ability to easily support smartphones and tablets.

While Lync delivers a wealth of benefits, it also creates some new challenges.

That includes a lack of visibility related to end-to-end performance, says Nectar's Tuttle. The issue is that Lync signaling and media has native encryption, for security purposes, that can blind users and their tools to what's happening with performance. Lync typically relies on a quality of service database for performance, he adds, and that's helpful if all you need is notice that there's a problem or post-call average information. What it lacks, however, is the ability to provide real-time information on performance, including the source location of the problem.

Let's look at how all this might come into play and how it can best be addressed.

NACR is a system and solution provider and Microsoft Gold Partner that specializes in Microsoft Lync UC integrations and ensures these solutions work as desired for businesses. Through their service offerings, NACR can ensure customer networks can deliver the quality of service required to support Lync in an optimal way. That includes confirming Lync QoS is enabled and working correctly. And it involves troubleshooting issues like call quality or call drops.

But troubleshooting such issues without the proper tools can be extremely time-consuming and resource-intensive since most Lync monitoring solutions are not proactive and require the user to first experience a poor or failed call and then report that call to the help desk. Then, after those user calls come in, Lync support teams frequently need to work with users to recreate the original problem so they can capture trace data and determine the root cause of the performance issue. It's a cumbersome process to say the least.

That's why Lync specialists like NACR are now adopting the Converged Management Platform from Nectar. This solution from Nectar can be used to ensure peak end-to-end performance both during pre-assessment and in deployed Lync networks.

Nectar CMP leverages patented technology to perform root-cause analysis, provides real-time visibility (via the CMP UCD module), offers the unique ability to discover network elements, and allows users to manage multiple users via a single pane of glass.

"After seeing the live data that could be captured from a poor or dropped call, as well as the inherent alerting capabilities available with the Nectar UCD module, I realized that troubleshooting Lync Enterprise Voice calls could now be done efficiently and proactively," comments NACR Advanced Diagnostics Engineer Nathan Knaak. "Because the UCD module is completely integrated with the Lync SDN API, we can see an issue as it is happening, see the network traces, and even see a report that shows at what point in the network the issue has occurred."

The Microsoft Lync SDN API to which Knaak is referring is a service that runs on the Lync front-end server. Nectar leverages the SDN API so its solution can provide network awareness and look at the media quality of Lync – and its various voice, video, and collaboration services – along various points in the network.

"Nectar is the most complete UC monitoring solution in the market that can consume the Lync SDN API and leverage it with unique technology to provide unmatched visibility for Lync" says Tuttle of Nectar, which has been a Microsoft Depth Partner for Lync SDN API Program since June 2012.

The Nectar CMP solution integrated with the Lync SDN API can result in a 70 percent reduction in resources needed to optimize Lync, adds Tuttle. That, he says, adds up to cost savings and more consistent user experiences for Lync users, and ultimately helps build end user trust for new Lync deployments and will expedite the adoption of Microsoft Lync/Skype for Business going forward. **IT**

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