

Looking for Faults in All the Wrong Places

AppCritical found and resolved a performance problem with a consulting firm's important, customer-facing application

- Without instrumenting the network, AppCritical found the problem in a completely different area than its suspected origin
- After weeks of frustration, AppCritical enabled dramatic service improvements in only a few hours

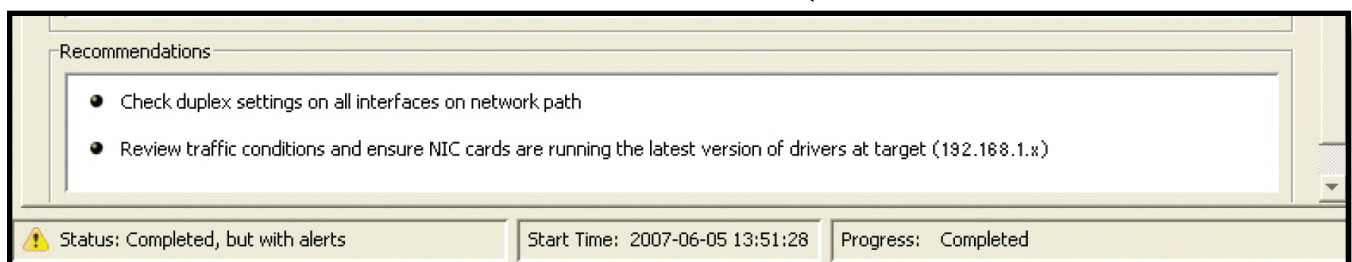
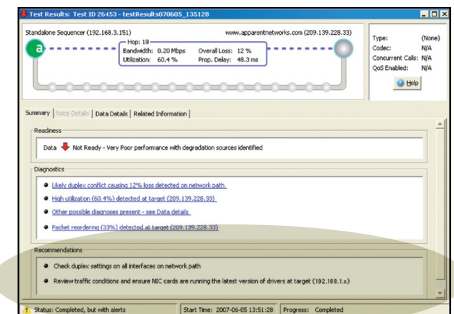
THE CUSTOMER

This Apparent Networks customer is a Virginia-based professional consulting firm with over 400 employees and over \$65M in annual sales. The company provides a range of consulting services, including program management, operational support, and management training, to various enterprises and federal and state government agencies. The customer uses AppCritical to monitor and manage its complex and highly distributed network.

THE PROBLEM

For months, the customer had experienced a severe performance problem with a customer-facing program management application. The problem seemed to originate from the server that housed that application. After spending several weeks testing and analyzing the machine to find the cause of the problem, the customer's IT team was no closer to finding the answer or resolving the problem.

The continuing problem was impacting the customer's clients who were escalating their complaints about how their lack of access was throwing their projects off schedule. That is when the customer decided to point AppCritical at the problem.



AppCritical's unique path-centric network testing and sophisticated analytics found the problem – a duplex mismatch between a router and a firewall. It had nothing to do with the suspected server. AppCritical identified in hours what the IT team hadn't been able to find for weeks.



THE RESOLUTION

An Apparent Networks sales engineer worked with the customer's IT team to focus AppCritical's powerful testing and analytic capabilities on the problematic network paths. First, the team tested application traffic flowing between several servers including the suspect problem machine, and detected no problems in those path segments. Next, the team initiated a test from the target server over the Internet to an Apparent Networks test site. AppCritical immediately identified and characterized a duplex mismatch between the customer's router and firewall. After a quick correction to the duplex setting, there was an immediate and dramatic improvement in application performance.

In another result that surprised the customer's IT team, AppCritical's testing turned up a secondary problem. It spotted excessive packet loss over the first outbound hop of their internet connection. The customer provided their access provider with a detailed AppCritical report on the problem, and it was corrected within one day.

The customer's traditional network management tool was of little help in this situation because all it could do was observe and report on the status and availability of individual network devices – and they all looked fine. The problems were network path-related, so they went undetected by that tool.

APPCRITICAL'S ACTIVE PATH ANALYSIS

Unlike traditional, device-centric management systems, which only provide data on network availability, AppCritical creates a new, 'application path' perspective. This approach focuses on the complete network paths used by application traffic. It looks at how network performance impacts application delivery on an end-to-end basis. By taking this approach, AppCritical is able to link network performance to the quality of the user experience for all voice, video and data applications.

THE OUTCOME

By focusing on the entire network path and not on just the server in question, AppCritical was able to precisely identify, characterize and suggest remediation for the customer's main problem – and another problem they didn't even know they had.

With the network path cleared, the performance problem was instantly eliminated, and the frustration levels among the customer's clients receded quickly. In fact, many clients called the customer to ask what the team had done to boost the performance of the program management application so dramatically.

We're not sure what the customer told their clients, but at Apparent Networks, we know the problem was solved by our AppCritical solution.



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