



Global Manufacturer Boosts Performance with WAAS Technology

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

METHANEX CORPORATION

- Industry: Methanol, household products, fuel, energy
- Headquartered in Vancouver, B.C. with offices in Belgium, Chile, China, Egypt, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Trinidad, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and the United States
- Approximately 800 employees

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Enable regions across the globe to quickly access applications from head office

BUSINESS SOLUTION

- Implement a Wide Area Application Service (WAAS) solution to accelerate applications over the WAN, eliminating the need to add costly bandwidth to global offices
- Global support with Cisco Technical Assistance Center (TAC)

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Network traffic has dropped by approximately 30 per cent
- Performance has increased in specific business applications, and traffic can be redistributed to others
- Costly bandwidth upgrades have been avoided

WAAS solution allows Methanex to reduce network traffic and avoid costly upgrades

Business Challenge

Methanex is the world's largest supplier of methanol to major international markets. Methanol is an important ingredient in many essential products including windshield washer fluid, recyclable plastic bottles, plywood floors, paint and synthetic fibres. As a global enterprise, Methanex is headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia, with manufacturing, marketing and supply chain capabilities in North America, Latin America, Europe, the Caribbean and throughout the Asia Pacific region.

Methanex's manufacturing sites around the globe host their own local applications, but many business applications are accessed from Vancouver, where the main infrastructure is housed. As well, regional marketing offices require most of their services from the Vancouver office, creating various links and very different bandwidth requirements as a result.

When the company began to notice an increase in the amount of requests for services and demand for applications, it realized it was time to find an alternative to its existing infrastructure. Methanex was also planning to consolidate email services and implement a document management system, so it began to look for options that would help to manage the demands for applications and support these business requirements.

Increasing bandwidth was considered to resolve the growing issues; however, it was very expensive to implement for certain regions, and therefore, not the best choice. Methanex's global IT team, comprising leaders from each of the firm's regions, created a list of requirements to determine a more cost-effective solution that would address all the business needs. They worked closely with a consultant firm to determine what alternative solutions might be available, and began to explore the benefits of Wide Area Application Services (WAAS).

Business Solution

After hearing the consultant firm's recommendations and doing its own research, Methanex's architecture team selected WAAS technology to remedy its ever-expanding bandwidth needs and application requirements. The team ran a proof of concept for products from different vendors, including Cisco.

Cisco WAAS is a comprehensive WAN optimization solution that accelerates applications over the WAN and offers local hosting of branch-office IT services. Cisco WAAS allows IT departments to centralize applications and storage in the data centre while maintaining LAN-like application performance, and provides locally hosted IT services while reducing the branch-office device footprint.

Cisco WAAS helps organizations accelerate applications to improve the productivity of remote employees; consolidate their IT and optimize the WAN to minimize branch IT costs; simplify their data protection; and allow for increased branch IT agility by responding rapidly to changing business needs.

“The Cisco WAAS solution was the best fit with all that we were trying to achieve,” says Laura Medina, manager, IT Operations at Methanex. “It was important to partner with companies we knew and trusted, while also helping ensure any new technology would integrate smoothly with what we already had in place. All of our network gear is Cisco, so the Cisco WAAS solution made the most sense.”

In addition, Cisco offers global support through its Technical Assistance Center (TAC) and has licensed protocols for Messaging Application Programming Interface (MAPI), thereby reducing the need for multiple vendor IT support.

After the Cisco technology was endorsed by the company’s global IT team, the company performed a pilot with three regions, including a corporate, marketing, and manufacturing office, to help ensure approval of the capital investment for the full implementation.

“We didn’t have the knowledge or technical expertise in-house to coordinate this pilot, or configure the optimization devices. We relied on help from a partner to configure, test, and monitor the devices and work with the regions to put them in place,” says Medina.

The Cisco partner selected by Methanex was Vancouver-based KOIOS Systems, which offers network solutions and consulting services to companies and organizations of all sizes.

Taking advantage of years of industry experience, KOIOS helps clients design and implement the latest networking technologies. As a Cisco Premier Partner and value-added reseller, KOIOS offers a wide range of networking equipment and professional services, offering clients complete, easily deployed solutions.

Prior to this engagement, KOIOS and Methanex had developed a relationship when Methanex began to investigate IP telephony solutions.

“KOIOS has provided us with sound advice and specialized resources and helped us look for the right technology solutions to meet our business needs,” Medina says. “They’ve helped us in many areas, including security. We have a trusted relationship built over the course of the last few years and we know that we can rely on their expertise.”

Results

Once the two-month pilot was completed, Methanex’s architecture team presented its results to the global IT team. While the company needed to have all the devices in place

“The Cisco WAAS solution was the best fit with all that we were trying to achieve. It was important to partner with companies we knew and trusted, while also helping ensure any new technology would integrate smoothly with what we already had in place. All of our network gear is Cisco, so the Cisco WAAS solution made the most sense.”

Laura Medina,
Manager, IT Operations, Methanex

before calculating its final numbers, the initial pilot resulted in a significant drop in traffic, enabling the approval for the rest of the regions’ implementation.

“With the pilot that we ran in three regions, we saw a 30 per cent drop in traffic as a result of better management,” says Medina.

As a result of that drop, Medina says there was increased performance in specific business applications. As well, because of the compressed environment, Methanex is now able to redistribute more traffic to other applications. The company is deferring bandwidth upgrades that it had planned for some of the regions, thereby saving on costs.

“The Methanex implementation of Cisco WAAS technology is a great example of how today’s businesses can create a faster, more efficient environment,” says Alexander Kochetkov, managing director at KOIOS. “By preparing the devices and offering our expertise, we were able to help ensure Methanex got the most from their new solution.”

As for the document management systems and email services consolidation that the company had planned, Medina says they are saving on costs there as well. There had been a need to increase bandwidth and add servers in order to accommodate these projects; however, with the improved services and additional network resources since the WAAS implementation, the costs for the increased bandwidth and added servers will not need to be incurred.

PRODUCT LIST

- Cisco Wide Area Application Engine
- Cisco WAAS Central Manager
- Cisco WAAS Enterprise
- Cisco WAE Inline Network Adapter

Next Steps

With the implementation 90 per cent complete, Methanex is looking forward to having all regions on board so the firm may take full advantage of its network optimization. With its new site in Egypt, for example, the company is waiting for the data centre to be in place before deploying the technology as part of the infrastructure.

“This is truly allowing us to have a better environment,” Medina says. “We can now go ahead and consolidate services and increasingly achieve better service and additional resources over the network.”

With the WAN optimization in place, Methanex is now working toward a Cisco Unified Communications solution for its global offices.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco WAAS, go to:
http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/ps5680/Products_Sub_Category_Home.html

To find out more about KOIOS Systems, go to: www.koiosystems.com