Case Study

ADARA Customer Spotlight: Atlantic Container Line Improves WAN Efficiency with SDN Deployment

About Atlantic Container Line (ACL)

Since 1967, ACL is a specialized carrier of containers, oversized cargo, heavy equipment & vehicles, with the world's largest containership/roll-on roll-off (CON-RO) vessels, between North America and Europe. ACL offers 5 weekly transatlantic sailings. The company also offers a direct RORO/Container service under their parent company, Grimaldi Lines, between North America and West Africa. In addition to these services, ACL provides RORO service via its network of transshipment providers throughout the world. ACL is a company of the Grimaldi Group of Naples, Italy.

The company has approximately 500 employees.

Doyle Research interviewed Tony Greco, General Manager Information Technology at Atlantic Container Line for this profile.

Current Network Architecture

Atlantic Container Line is headquartered in New Jersey and operates 6 main regional locations, including sites in Virginia, the UK, Sweden, and Belgium. ACL has a MPLS WAN provided by AT&T and BT. Its network infrastructure (ethernet switches and routers) is all Cisco. ACL has deployed Call Manager from Cisco for all its voice services (VoIP).

 ACL's main data center is located in NJ with the secondary site in Belgium. ACL currently has an active-passive DC design, but is migrating to an active-active architecture during 2013. The key applications for ACL are its in-house transportation application (Atlas), SAP, Oracle, and Microsoft Exchange.

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Network Challenges

ACL faced a number of wide area network (WAN) challenges on its global network, including:

- MPLS circuit saturation at peak use, while some circuits were underused

- High latency of certain applications

- Poor voice (VoIP) quality

- Long times to update imaging software to remote desktops

Its current applications require a lot of data replication between data centers, especially Oracle and Microsoft Exchange.

SDN Selection

Tony Greco approached his channel partner, NetConnect, to propose a solution to Atlantic Container Line's WAN challenges. NetConnect recommended installation of ADARA's Sirius router and Comet service assurance products at headquarters and at 6 regional locations to improve WAN quality of service. ADARA Sirius and Comet products were installed in October 2012.

SDN Installation Process

Working with ADARA engineers on site, the installation process went "fairly smoothly". The SDN implementation took 2 weeks to install, configure, and test before it went live. ACL identified specific (priority) traffic types, including Altas, SAP, and VoIP applications.

ACL is currently learning the ADARA command line interface (CLI) so they can be "hands on" with the SDN implementation. They plan to continue to adjust the network to add additional traffic types and further improve traffic efficiency.

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Benefits of ADARA SDN solution at Atlantic Container Line

ACL experienced significant benefits from the ADARA SDN implementation including:

- Better WAN circuit balancing

- Reduced latency (including better voice quality)

- More flexible (multi-path) routing to improve redundancy at remote sites

- Reduced the need to upgrade WAN bandwidth (cost avoidance)

ACL's client image software upgrades (NJ to UK) which previously took 45 minutes per desktop now load in approximately 10 minutes – thus increasing IT productivity and improving customer service.

The data center to data center replication process is now "much faster" and ACL is more comfortable with its move to an "active-active" data center network **without** having to upgrade its international WAN circuits – an expensive proposition.

Next Steps

ACL plans to roll-out the ADARA SDN products to two additional sites during the next couple of months. It plans to further improve voice quality by tagging VoIP packets. ACL will leverage ADARA capabilities as it moves to an active-active data center architecture.

Key Points

- ACL experienced significant improvement in its WAN performance and QoS after the ADARA installation

- ADARA product installation went smoothly

- ACL received OPEX and cost (avoidance) benefits from the installation

- Planning to rollout ADARA Sirius and Comet products to a couple additional sites

Doyle Research
Doyle Research provides client focused targeted analysis on the Evolution of Intelligent Networks: SDN, OPEX, and COTS. Doyle Research delivers quantitative and qualitative analysis, forecasting, and market positioning advice to network and IT industry vendors.

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