



AAAE Transforms, Optimizes Its Network to Fight Terrorism

September 11th changed the U.S. aviation industry forever. The Tuesday before Thanksgiving of 2001, the Federal Aviation Administration requested the American Association of Airport Executives' (AAAE's) help in implementing a central system for aviation worker background checks. AAAE completed this task in only 50 days. Building on the success of this program, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) turned to AAAE to host the nationwide Registered Traveler program. Today, AAAE facilitates the backgrounds of thousands of citizens and maintains direct, secure connections to the TSA, FBI, and all 429 commercial airports.

Since September 11th, AAAE's IT infrastructure has tripled in size and is still growing. To manage this explosive growth, AAAE Senior Vice President of IT, Pat Osborne, needed a tool to monitor bandwidth usage, including employee time spent surfing and chatting. After a three-year search, he chose the Enterprise Edition of eTelemetry's Metron.



Senior Vice President, Pat Osborne, (left) and Senior Network Engineer, Francis Mwita, (right) of AAAE.

"I've got six T1s, do I need a seventh? With incoming data from the government and all of the airports relying on the availability of the information, I need to be able to manage my bandwidth. I need to know how much we are using and who is going where," says Osborne, adding, "I don't want to build out the network because everyone is watching ESPN."

Osborne had originally found a software product that appeared perfectly suited to his needs. After three months of successful testing on a subnet, the software was deployed on the production network. Almost immediately, a core switch seized, bringing down the network. Thinking it was a faulty switch, the IT staff spent three days troubleshooting and experienced intermittent outages before realizing that the bandwidth software was the culprit. He needed a passive product—one that would not put his network at risk.

Then Osborne found and began beta testing eTelemetry's Metron appliance. Metron passively analyzes a mirrored copy of the network traffic so it adds no overhead and poses no risk to the production networks.

"I don't care how good a product is—it can't bring down my network," says Osborne, "Metron was the tool I'd been after for quite a while." After a three year search and the frustrating attempt at using an in-line bandwidth product, he purchased Metron in October of 2006.

In the AAAE solution, the Enterprise Edition of Metron came bundled with eTelemetry's Locate appliance. Winner of three major industry awards in 2006, Locate's patented technology



passively associates the person to their IP address, PC (MAC address), and switch port in real time. This gave Osborne total end-point visibility across his network rolled up into a central browser-based management console. In addition to bandwidth accounting, Locate helps Osborne keep track of assets and rapidly respond to security and network issues identified by IP address. Locate's historic time slice feature also helps Osborne conduct forensic analysis on older incidents identified by IP, even though his IPs are dynamically assigned. Locate tells him the name of the person using the IP at the time of the incident.

One key feature in Metron is its reporting capability. Osborne is able to "time slice" to see information over a set period of time to quickly and easily spot trends in bandwidth usage and time spent surfing and chatting. Reports are provided in graphical charts that can be taken into management meetings, with drill down and export features for more detailed analysis.

"I can bring a Metron chart to the President's office to justify a budget request. I don't need to process 75 Excel spreadsheets to make a decision, I just pull up reports. If I see a spike in bandwidth the second Tuesday of the month, I'm going to want to see what you are doing. Metron lets me to do this," says Osborne.

While bandwidth management was the primary reason for purchasing Metron, the reports and graphs showing total employee time spent surfing and chatting through the day has been an eye opener.

"I can look at a person and see the hundreds of sites they have visited. It's good to see people are working and it's nice as a reminder. I tell my staff 'Don't give me a reason to look!'" says Osborne chuckling.

Osborne plans to demonstrate Metron at the next AAAE All Hands meeting as a friendly reminder that, "Bandwidth is for company business, not personal business."

"Wearing my CIO hat, Metron tells me where I am now and where I need to be. It helps with both monitoring and planning. Wearing my security hat, I can tell if my network resources are being used frivolously. Vendors will come by and offer to do an up-front analysis, but I just pull up Metron and give *them* the analysis."

Despite hosting the Registered Traveler and the aviation worker vetting programs, serving a membership base of 4,500, and providing 80 AAAE staff with full IT support, Osborne's team includes only four network engineers and six software developers.

"I'm always looking for IT tools that will automate manual tasks and better serve my members, the aviation community. Metron helps me do this," says Osborne, "It is both a monitoring and a planning tool. It shows me how I'm using my network and where I need to be heading."

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— Pat Osborne,
Senior Vice President of IT, American
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