

Metron Enterprise Howard County, Maryland

Overview

Howard County, Maryland is a municipality serving a population of more than 270,000 people. Howard County is located in the central part of Maryland between Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

Howard County, Maryland is frequently cited for its quality of life and excellent schools. In 2008, it was ranked 17th in the nation on the *Forbes Magazine* list of America's "Best Places to Raise a Family." Whether it concerns emergency service or providing permit applications, the county and its customers depend on a reliable and robust IT network.

The Challenge

Howard County Government has approximately 3,000 users on its County IT network. Users who engaged in streaming music and inappropriate surfing or had misconfigured PCs, for example, were straining the network and impacting employee use for legitimate work purposes. Limited resources and an inability to monitor network activity left Howard County without any reliable way of identifying the sources of these violations. Further, Howard County's Human Resources and Office of Law had difficulty effectively compiling proof of low productivity or egregious Internet abuse. Nevertheless, based upon internal information, the IT department would be routinely asked to analyze hard drives for evidence of inappropriate behavior—a time consuming task that resulted in an extended warning and firing process so that only the most severe cases were investigated.

Howard County required a solution that would quickly and easily give it an ability to monitor the activity on the County network. Suspecting incidents of inappropriate use, the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Law would likely be involved. As a result, the data had to be presented in a user-friendly manner and yet be comprehensive enough to satisfy the IT Department.

Howard County turned to Metron Enterprise by eTelemetry.

The Solution

Metron is a plug-and-play network appliance that monitors network activity, providing real-time and historic reporting on network utilization by person and department. Metron Enterprise bundles eTelemetry's Metron and Locate appliances, leveraging Locate's patented technology to passively map people to their IP address, PC (MAC address), and switch port in real-time, as well as historically. The bundled solution provides powerful and user-friendly information that can be utilized by IT, HR, and management.

Using Metron, Howard County identified employees who spent hours a day on eBay.

Upon deployment, Metron immediately identified hundreds of individuals in violation of County Internet use policies. Internet violations ranged from misconfigured PCs to Internet abuse. Reports on top bandwidth users, top surfers, and site traffic greatly simplified the detection and documentation of unauthorized network activity. Using Metron, Howard County identified employees who spent hours a day on eBay. Metron cut the time

Problems Howard County Solved with Metron Enterprise

- Budgetary Concerns
- Productivity Loss
- Excessive Bandwidth Usage
- Network Management
- Use Policy Violations



required to compile evidence for disciplinary action against these employees from several hours to just a few minutes. Metron's real-time and historic reporting ensures that not only is inappropriate activity identified and documented, but that it is associated with an employee by name for legal support of corrective or disciplinary action.

Additional Benefits

Metron Enterprise's user-friendly reports and powerful technology have enabled Howard County to identify and solve a variety of network issues.

Saving Time and Money

During a recent circuit move, Howard County leveraged Locate's capabilities to quickly identify the people and devices that were still mapped to the old circuit. They were able to make the switch to the new circuit a month sooner than expected thanks to Metron. The information obtained from a few simple reports saved the IT department a month of labor costs and an additional \$10,000 by enabling them to release the circuit a month early. Further savings were realized by eliminating an untold number of help desk hours to resolve issues with misconfigured devices, which previously would have only been apparent after the cut over had been completed and were easily identified by Locate before the switch.

While switching to a new Internet circuit, a few simple reports saved the IT department a month of labor costs and an additional \$10,000 by enabling them to release the old circuit a month early.

Locate's powerful technology also enabled IT staff to quickly identify employees while the underlying IP and directory schemes were in flux. "Locate has proven to be invaluable as we migrate from one IP address scheme to another. It enables us to quickly identify the PCs we have missed in our conversion process and pinpoint their physical location for remediation," said Howard County's CIO, Ira Levy. "In the past we had to locate people based on a time-consuming, manual process. The time savings involved in rapidly identifying an employee's physical location based on their IP or MAC address makes my IT organization more efficient."

Supporting the Green Initiative

Metron Enterprise's diverse reporting capabilities were further utilized to reduce energy consumption and free up bandwidth for mission critical applications. Howard County leveraged Metron's Gateway Anomaly Detection Dashboard to identify individuals who left their PCs on after-hours, a violation of policy that not only presents a security problem, but also consumes energy unnecessarily.

Eliminating Bandwidth Hogs

Howard County resolved some pressing bandwidth issues by using the Highest Bandwidth Sites report to identify misconfigured PCs that were pulling updates directly from Microsoft and Symantec websites instead of local servers deployed for this purpose. Addressing this freed up a significant amount of the total available bandwidth, enabling the County to run off-site data backups they had previously been unable to run due to a lack of available bandwidth.

"The combined solution was easy to deploy and very unobtrusive to our daily operations," commented Levy. "Metron Enterprise solved organizational problems as well as IT-specific problems, allowing us to operate county government more efficiently for our tax-payers."

Contact eTelemetry

eTelemetry

Turning Network Traffic into Business Intelligence

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