



SevOne and TravelCenters of America Success Story

TA TravelCenters of America

Company:

TravelCenters of America (TA)
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Westlake, OH 44145-5639
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Industry: Travel services

Sales/Service Area:

Nationwide United States

Operational Impact:

By monitoring network activity with SevOne, TA makes network performance more reliable and efficient for 24/7 communication between TA headquarters and nationwide TA franchises.

SevOne Puts TravelCenters of America on the Road to Network Visibility and More Efficient Monitoring

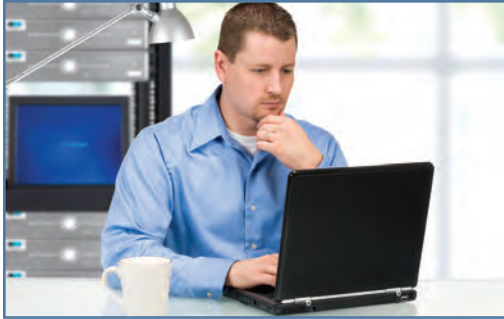
The Customer

Many a weary truck driver and vacation traveler have found the big blue and red "TA" sign to be a welcoming sight after driving long hours along America's highways. TravelCenters of America (TA), headquartered in Westlake, OH, is the largest full-service travel center business in the United States. Established 30 years ago, TA locations across the country offer both professional and leisure travelers an oasis to rest and refuel. TA centers provide diesel fuel and gasoline through its automated fueling system Pronto! Pass, and also host full-service restaurants, brand-name hotel facilities, and national fast food restaurants. The company is also known for its unique Network-Wide Maintenance Database for truck repairs.

The Challenge

TA has a large and dynamic IT environment at its Westlake, OH headquarters, which includes all of the servers, routers, switches, and primary and secondary datacenters. It connects with the company's multiple nationwide franchises via an MPLS network cloud. The franchises use a LAN-to-LAN VPN, and they connect to the main network cloud through a virtual tunnel through their firewall, which is supplied by headquarters, to the main firewall in Westlake. The franchises need to communicate with headquarters several times a day, so network availability and performance are critical.

Managing and monitoring such a dynamic network presented several challenges. If the main network connection to headquarters was saturated, for example, it affected communication with all of the franchises connected to it. Such issues could slow down the processing of transactions and affect cash flow. What's more, identifying and fixing a network problem was a tedious and time-consuming task for IT. The network engineer would have to manually log in to the head end router to get only generic information to solve the problem.



Challenge:

TA needed greater visibility into its network to achieve faster resolution of network problems and to identify issues to prevent outages before they occurred.

Solution:

SevOne's Performance Appliance Solution (PAS)

Operational Impact & Benefits:

- Enabled better visibility into network activity
- Automated network monitoring for greater efficiency
- Reduced network downtime to ensure 24/7 transaction processing

"Our biggest challenge was that we did not have any real visibility into what was happening on the network," said Eric DePanfilis, Network Engineer for TravelCenters of America. "We had a monitoring system that was basically 'break/fix' and responded only when something went down in the network. We needed a system that helps us to identify issues that might cause a problem before the system went down so we could prevent it from happening."

The Approach

IT management at TA looked at several large network monitoring/management technology companies and SevOne, a Newark, Delaware-based network performance management company dedicated to providing tools and services that enable organizations to keep increasingly complex networks and applications functioning at peak performance levels. SevOne was the obvious choice in terms of performance and price.

"Without SevOne a problem like this would have been impossible for us to troubleshoot."

— Eric DePanfilis, Network Engineer
TravelCenters of America (TA)

"The peer-to-peer, distributed nature, instant graphing/reporting capabilities and affordable price point originally brought us to SevOne," DePanfilis says. "The SevOne solution gives us the full visibility we need so we can monitor and prevent chronic problems before they happen – and at three to four times less the cost as the larger vendors."

SevOne's Performance Appliance Solution (PAS) includes a built-in performance history audit, enabling network operators to quickly pinpoint emerging problems anywhere on the network and prevent future problems from occurring. TA installed the SevOne solution at its Westlake headquarters for the proactive monitoring of over 20,000 elements. No other appliances were needed at any of the other TA sites.

"Ease of deployment was another reason for choosing SevOne," DePanfilis says. "With other companies you need to put sensors here, or a second or third box there. With SevOne we just have one server. Our servers in the field were easily preconfigured as to how we wanted to monitor them. We just point SevOne to them or point the devices to SevOne. The ease of doing this was phenomenal."

On a daily basis, the SevOne solution gives IT management at TA complete visibility into the entire network and granular information that goes far beyond the previous generic reports from the old monitoring system.

“For example, we can see exactly when the network peaks out at certain times and why,” DePanfilis says. “Maybe it’s an antivirus program that gets pushed out at 3 p.m. and it saturates the network. We can change that to push it out at night, when activity is lower. This helps us manage the network more efficiently.”

“With SevOne, we always know what is happening in the network and we can head off any problems before they cause an outage.”

— Eric DePanfilis, Network Engineer
TravelCenters of America (TA)

DePanfilis also praises the granularity of the reports and graphical user interface (GUI) in the SevOne solution and how they help him have near real-time visibility into the network.

“We can run the graphs in multiple forms, such as line graphs and pie charts, and we can import data from Excel spreadsheets,” DePanfilis says. “For example, I can jump into a remote site interface and can run reports on what they were doing in the past week or month. Were they over-utilized or under-utilized? From that same graph I can zoom into a real-time view for a better measurement.”

TA is a Cisco shop, and DePanfilis can also run a Cisco Netflow report directly from the same SevOne graph, so he can see not only the peaks, but also highlight them, click on Netflow, and see exactly when the peak happened.

“The SevOne solution is very interactive,” DePanfilis says. “I can detach the graph and set it to auto refresh every few seconds and I can see the graph move as if in real time. With SevOne, we always know what is happening in the network and we can head off any problems before they cause an outage. That is vitally important to keeping our business running efficiently.”

SevOne Differentiators Include:

- Monitoring service infrastructure performance through enhanced device level visibility
- Rapid certification, attentive customization
- Polling devices without degrading performance
- Data reuse eliminates secondary polling source
- Distributed architecture lightens server load, expedites data retrieval
- Federated data prompts remediation at the point of disruption

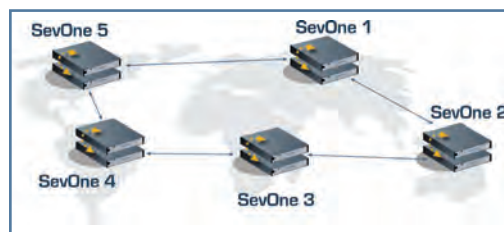
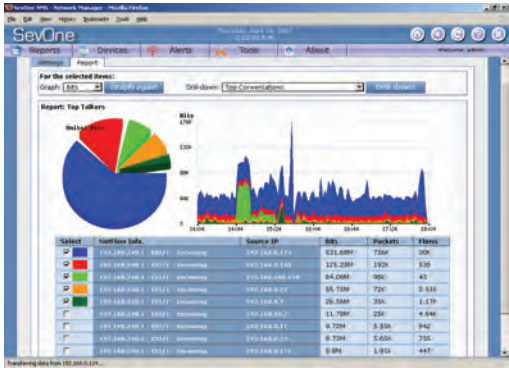


Illustration:
SevOne’s distributed peer-to-peer architecture



“By giving us unprecedented visibility into our network, SevOne will definitely help us achieve our goal of 99.99 percent availability.”

— Eric DePanfilis, Network Engineer
TravelCenters of America (TA)

The Benefits

According to DePanfilis, using the SevOne solution has helped the IT department at TA overcome the biggest challenges to monitoring and troubleshooting the network. Tedious manual processes are a thing of the past, resulting in fewer man-hours required to detect and fix network anomalies. As a result, problems are fixed faster, resulting in a more reliable system to quickly process the thousands of transactions from TA's nationwide sites.

“We recently ran into an issue where he had deployed wireless bridges and they were dropping off the network a few times a day,” DePanfilis said. “Compared to how we used to do it, it was very easy and efficient to go into SevOne and physically see in the graphs when a bridge dropped off and how often. Without SevOne a problem like this would have been impossible for us to troubleshoot.”

Over the next 12 months, DePanfilis expects the TA network to grow in response to meeting PCI compliance and other regulatory measures. The company will be adding more equipment and added firewalls and other security initiatives. During this expansion, TA's IT management will be challenged to keep the network running reliably and efficiently.

“SevOne definitely plays into our future plans,” DePanfilis says. “As we make the network more secure, we must also make sure that we run 24/7 to capture our transactions. By giving us unprecedented visibility into our network, SevOne will definitely help us achieve our goal of 99.999 percent availability.”

