



LIZ CLAIBORNE INC

Organization

Liz Claiborne

<http://www.lizclaiborninc.com>

Industry

Manufacturer and Retailer

Challenge

Manage WAN bandwidth intelligently for its converged, enterprise-wide network

Accommodate a mix of both centralized and distributed applications serving employees in some 40 different locations worldwide

Minimize packet loss and latency, which varied from 3 to 300 milliseconds, to improve VoIP quality of service

Provide centralized control over all bandwidth management policies

Avoid, if possible, the need to upgrade WAN services at any location

Solution

Deploy suitable models of Blue Coat's PacketShaper appliances at 36 office locations in North America, Europe and Asia, and then manage them centrally with PolicyCenter in a scalable manner

Liz Claiborne Dresses Up Application Performance with Blue Coat® PacketShaper® Appliances for Intelligent Application Visibility, Optimization and Application QoS

THE CHALLENGE: Manage WAN bandwidth intelligently enterprise-wide to improve the performance of both VoIP and business-critical applications

Liz Claiborne has a truly state-of-the-art network infrastructure. The company pioneered convergence by replacing a legacy TDM PBX system with a VoIP solution back in 2003, and currently operates a redundant Cisco® CallManager IP PBX cluster in the New York metropolitan area. The company also operates a full spectrum of demanding business applications, including People-Soft®, JD Edwards®, Oracle®, SEWN for enterprise resource planning, RAMS for retail management, Windchill for product lifecycle management, and Microsoft® Exchange for e-mail and collaboration.

Complicating the need to manage network performance more intelligently enterprise-wide is the company's mix of both centralized and distributed applications serving employees scattered throughout the world at 40 different locations. The primary data center is in North Bergen, New Jersey, with regional hubs in California, Hong Kong and Holland. With such a widespread network, latency varied from 3 to 300 milliseconds, depending on the location of both the user's office and the hub hosting the particular application.

Based on Liz Claiborne's goal to meet the constantly fluctuating tastes of its global customers through "just-in-time fashion," certain critical applications had to deliver peak performance to every single satellite office served with WAN links ranging in size from T1 (1.5 Mbps) to DS3 (45 Mbps). In addition, the company now operates nearly 5,000 VoIP phones, which must share bandwidth with these business-critical and many other applications. With traffic from so many different applications contending for the same finite bandwidth, the company knew it would need an intelligent, enterprise-wide application delivery solution.

THE SOLUTION: Intelligently classify, shape and monitor strategic applications to optimize bandwidth utilization and assure VoIP quality of service

To address its application performance and bandwidth management challenges, Liz Claiborne is deploying different models of PacketShaper appliances on nearly every one of its WAN circuits companywide. Leveraging the Shaping module's quality of service (QoS) capabilities ensures high-priority traffic is guaranteed to receive specific levels of bandwidth, providing ultra high availability and performance even during peak congestion periods. This "traffic shaping" is especially important for maintaining the quality and integrity of voice calls by minimizing total latency and virtually eliminating packet loss.

Joe Yankauskas, IT director, explains the rationale for choosing PacketShapers over all other systems considered as a potential solution: "The success of our business model is heavily dependent upon the uninterrupted and high performance delivery of our core voice, ERP and product lifecycle applications. Triggering the need for the Blue Coat solution was the PacketShaper's visibility capabilities that confirmed our discretionary traffic, such as web browsing, was often consuming far too much bandwidth, thereby imposing performance penalties on our most essential network traffic."

To date, Yankauskas and his staff have deployed a total of 36 PacketShaper appliances. Twenty model 2500s serve the smaller offices; the dozen mid-size offices are each served by a model 4500; and the four largest locations are all equipped with a model 6500. Seven of the units are deployed in Europe, another seven are in the Asia-Pacific region, with the remainder in North America.



“With routers and switches providing only rudimentary capabilities, at best, the sophisticated application intelligence and bandwidth management we gain from deploying PacketShapers is crucial to our worldwide business.”

- Joe Yankauskas, IT Director

All 36 PacketShapers will be managed centrally using Blue Coat’s PolicyCenter® software. From a single console with an intuitive user interface, different members of the IT staff (each assigned appropriate roles and capabilities) can deploy and configure new PacketShaper appliances; create, change and apply network-wide bandwidth management policies; monitor performance in real-time; and automatically distribute software updates and plug-ins to all systems installed.

The company recently added ReportCenter® software from Blue Coat. “ReportCenter will enable us to centrally monitor all traffic flowing through our distributed network in order to quickly and easily perform trend analysis and better understand application performance by presenting raw metrics as meaningful data for assessment by our IT teams,” says Yankauskas. “This will be a problem resolution tool to not only help us maintain business continuity at the highest performance levels possible, but will also ensure our WAN circuits are performing at peak levels to deliver critical application traffic so we can avoid unnecessary and expensive upgrades.”

THE RESULTS: Achieved performance and QoS objectives with no need to add bandwidth throughout the existing WAN infrastructure

With PacketShapers deployed throughout Liz Claiborne’s global enterprise network, the IT staff is able to classify, prioritize and intelligently control all traffic to deliver optimal performance for all of the company’s converged applications.

VoIP traffic is assigned the highest priority to ensure satisfactory QoS. Next in the priority hierarchy are the business-critical data applications, such as enterprise resource management and retail management. Last but not least are those applications that can tolerate delays during peak traffic periods, such as E-mail, Web access, and less critical business applications.

Liz Claiborne has found Blue Coat’s application-intelligent bandwidth management capabilities to be both comprehensive and easy to use. The policy-based framework allows the IT staff to identify, classify and prioritize all traffic flows, apply TCP and UDP rate controls, provision application sessions, and suppress threatening or unwanted behaviors. The auto-discovery mechanism automatically classifies hundreds of networked applications, and even allows the staff to create custom classifications as needed. For VoIP traffic, bandwidth can be allocated on a per-session basis to ensure sufficient QoS without adversely affecting other business-critical applications.

To help determine appropriate policies and assist with capacity planning efforts, the PacketShapers transparently measure response times across applications, providing the network, server delay and congestion metrics needed to accurately assess the performance of all applications. Additional parameters tracked include connection statistics, host histories and per-flow information on individual sessions.

Summarizing the PacketShaper appliance’s ability to provide intelligent application delivery, Yankauskas concludes, “In a network as extensive and as elaborate as ours, it is essential to constantly manage bandwidth utilization intelligently. The sophisticated application intelligence and bandwidth management we gain from deploying PacketShapers is crucial to our worldwide business.”

Blue Coat Systems, Inc. 1.866.30.BCOAT // +1.408.220.2200 *Direct* // 1.408.220.2250 *Fax* // www.bluecoat.com

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