

COLT: Measuring Performance to Maximize Efficiency and Increase Customer Loyalty



Industry: Business Services

Customer Benefits

- ▶ **Proactive Service Assurance:** Using performance data from InfoVista, COLT's network managers can detect, isolate and proactively resolve performance issues before degradation occurs and customers are impacted.
- ▶ **More Effective Planning and Execution:** InfoVista's capacity monitoring capabilities enable COLT to better anticipate future infrastructure requirements, expand IP services, and add new customers—without service disruption.
- ▶ **Integration and Scalability:** InfoVista's flexible solution integrates seamlessly with COLT's existing management systems and scales to meet the continued growth of COLT's network and service offerings.
- ▶ **Proof of SLA Compliance:** COLT's customers get real-time service performance reports that allow them to check if they are receiving the correct level of service.



COLT is a leading European provider of business communications with

metropolitan area networks in 34 major European cities. Founded over 16 years ago in London, COLT has built a 15,534 mile long (25,000 kilometer) high quality optic fiber network spanning 13 European countries with direct-line connectivity to 16,000 of Europe's key buildings. The company offers a portfolio of end-to-end communication services, including voice, data, and managed services, and supports more than 50,000 midsize and major businesses and wholesale customers across all industries including service, manufacturing, finance, and government.

Following its launch in 1992, COLT underwent a period of rapid geographic expansion across Europe. With each new city that was added to the network, the local network managers implemented their preferred methods of monitoring network traffic and performance, with many choosing to deploy their own local open source solutions. As a result, the company was left with a patchwork network supporting a variety of OSS platforms and network monitoring solutions. Not only did this require a great deal of management in terms of time and manpower, it also compromised the overall performance of the network.

Seeking a Comprehensive, Customized Solution

"We knew our ability to maximize network efficiency and operational effectiveness was critical to the organization for a number of reasons," explains Neil McRae, director of network architecture at COLT. "It can create competitive advantage, improve business effectiveness, reduce operating risk, and lower total cost of operations. In order to guarantee network availability and assure optimal delivery of business critical IT services, we needed to consolidate the various local systems onto one standardized platform that would support the performance monitoring and management requirements in the OSS."

To address this, COLT evaluated performance management packages from a variety of leading vendors. "We wanted to be able to ensure a guaranteed level of service for our customers so we were looking for a customized performance problem detection solution which would give us the ability to prioritize operational response based on an overall view of the network," McRae said. "We also wanted to provide our customers with visibility into their service and a better understanding of network performance."

COLT assessed a number of options but, in the end, found that only InfoVista could provide a service-centric performance management solution capable of meeting all its requirements. The flexibility, scalability, and openness of InfoVista's software leveraged COLT's IT infrastructure delivering a competitive advantage and driving new services and revenue streams.

A dedicated InfoVista consultant team made up of skilled engineers helped COLT define the project and worked with COLT on the installation, deployment design, and implementation. The resulting solution fit with COLT's needs to proactively manage the services it offers to its business customers and made it possible to easily adapt to specific customer requirements. The platform provides full service level visibility of the performance of components and connections throughout COLT's entire network infrastructure, including 10,000 CPEs and 400 core and access devices from different network equipment vendors.

Seamless Integration a Must

When COLT made the initial decision to deploy InfoVista, a critical requirement was the new system would be able to leverage COLT's existing technology investments, such as the EMC Smarts fault management software. The company was pleased to learn InfoVista interacts seamlessly with EMC Smarts to provide trend analysis, notification of service degradation, help with network troubleshooting, and optimization of the end-to-end service experience. The inherent flexibility and openness of InfoVista software means it also integrates seamlessly with COLT's existing management systems, including COLT's own home-grown provisioning tool and back-end LDAP for access authentication. Additionally, InfoVista's distributed architecture also means COLT can deploy products incrementally, and its scalability can facilitate the continued growth of COLT's network and service offerings.

"InfoVista's support services were critical in our decision to implement InfoVista, and it was the main reason why we decided against deploying the local open source solutions originally used by many of the local network managers across the whole network," said McRae. "Not only were InfoVista's consultant teams heavily involved at the beginning of the project, but InfoVista's support services provided us with ongoing expertise throughout the project." On hand at all times to diagnose and resolve problems quickly and collaborate to identify new service opportunities, InfoVista's support services played an important role in keeping costs down, enabling COLT to continue to deliver new services to customers at competitive prices.

The flexibility and scalability of InfoVista's solution has enabled the platform to evolve with the network to support new, bandwidth intensive services.

Neil McRae,
COLT Director of Network Architecture

Performance and Service Delivered

The performance data collected and displayed by InfoVista is used in a number of different ways both internally by COLT's employees and externally by its business customers. Internally, COLT's network operations department uses the real-time and historical performance information from InfoVista to get a better understanding of the health of the network. Using that data, COLT's network managers can prioritize operational response based on business end-user impact and detect, isolate and proactively resolve performance issues before degradation occurs. COLT's capacity planning department also uses InfoVista's solutions to determine future network capacity requirements. By monitoring utilization trends the department can anticipate infrastructure requirements and avoid service degradations. They can also expand IP services and add new customers to the network with minimum disruption.

Since the InfoVista platform was introduced, COLT's requirements have continued to evolve as the company faces new challenges. One of the more recent departments to benefit from the selection of InfoVista is marketing. This team uses the analysis from InfoVista to get a better understanding of customer needs and anticipate customer requirements so they can promote COLT's services more effectively.

Additionally, COLT's customers directly benefit from having a better understanding of how the network is performing. Individually customized InfoVista service performance reports are provided to COLT's customers in real time, via an online portal, allowing them to check if they are receiving the correct level of service. "InfoVista has played a key role in helping COLT provide better quality services to its customers and manage the performance of its network more effectively," McRae said. "The flexibility and scalability of InfoVista's solution has enabled the platform to evolve with the network to support new, bandwidth intensive services."

By raising the quality and reliability of service level delivery and providing customers with enhanced visibility into guaranteed levels of service, COLT has been able to enhance customer service and improve performance around provisioning, capacity planning, and service assurance.

"InfoVista's approach to performance management has meant we can consolidate all our services under one umbrella with a common look and feel, and also dynamically address service issues internally," McRae said. "By offering our business customers enhanced visibility into service delivery and network performance, we have been able to significantly improve operational and financial efficiencies and even more importantly outperform our competitors in terms of reliability and value."

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