Visionist doubles visibility and improves management of central government infrastructure with Highlight

Visionist, experts in digital transformation and IT service management, gains full insight into the health of a government department's infrastructure and full visibility of service performance with Highlight.

With the help of Highlight, Visionist enhances its management of the cloud-based network and end user computer hosting and support for up to 8,000 workers across 24 sites.

CHALLENGES

In search of end-to-end visibility

Walter Rossi, Network and Security Consultant at Visionist says, "The whole government environment is cloud based. To manage this disparate infrastructure effectively, we needed visibility into the quality of the connectivity to cloud services as well as the quality of the services we were receiving."

Visionist had been using several monitoring tools to manage the various parts of the department's network including its wireless, LAN infrastructure and inter-site WAN connectivity.

This previous system was based on home-grown applications using open source software, but it required a highly skilled team and considerable resources. It also required the in-house service management team to jump between seven or eight different applications to watch over the network.

"It had become an unbearable weight," confirms Walter. "Most importantly, the system lacked the fundamental ability to deliver end-to-end visibility of the whole infrastructure."

SOLUTION

Following a review of the market, Visionist selected Highlight. The initial proof of concept took place in early 2019 and the system went live in August the same year.

Walter adds, "Highlight met all our requirements. It is cloud-based, good value for money and delivers full flexibility so we can start small and grow over time as we introduce it to more government departments and customers.

"Most importantly, it was ready and waiting. It made far more sense to go down the route of a third-party monitoring service that can deliver the same high-quality day in and day out.

"We've retained a few specialist monitoring tools to deliver specific information about parts of the infrastructure, but these are designed for closed environments and can't provide Highlight's unique holistic overview."

Visionist now has a single pane of glass showing the health of the whole network. It corrals data from all the different systems, including a dozen third parties. It displays the performance of firewalls at every site, all the interfaces connected to the firewalls such as WANs and LANs, as well as the software defined WANs and Wi-Fi.

"Highlight presents the information in a user friendly and easy to read dashboard," explains Walter. "In addition to seeing the performance at each physical location, we receive real time alerts if anything is not performing as required.

"I particularly value Highlight's reports on the Wi-Fi performance. It is far more insightful than the actual management station provided by the vendor."

OUTCOMES

Walter confirms, "As a small team with a wide remit, the quicker we receive information about issues on the infrastructure, the sooner we can resolve them."

Walter and his team can now spot if portions of the network are degrading and take proactive steps to avoid failures. End user faults are identified in real time before they get reported, trends across a multitude of devices can be analysed and issues resolved before they become problems. Highlight's monitoring and performance matrix also gives the team an accurate direction to then undertake deeper investigations.

For example, the team identified that workers across several locations were experiencing slow speeds, failed connections and dropouts when using the internet and Microsoft Office applications. Highlight identified that the faults were happening at the same time of day with the same symptoms. The team informed the third- party WAN provider who fixed the failing devices.

More recently, the team found a series of stale sessions; when a service on the network has been stopped but remains active, taking up valuable bandwidth.

"With Highlight's holistic view of the network, we spotted the problem, prevented the issue becoming an outage and worked with the vendor to create a long-term solution."
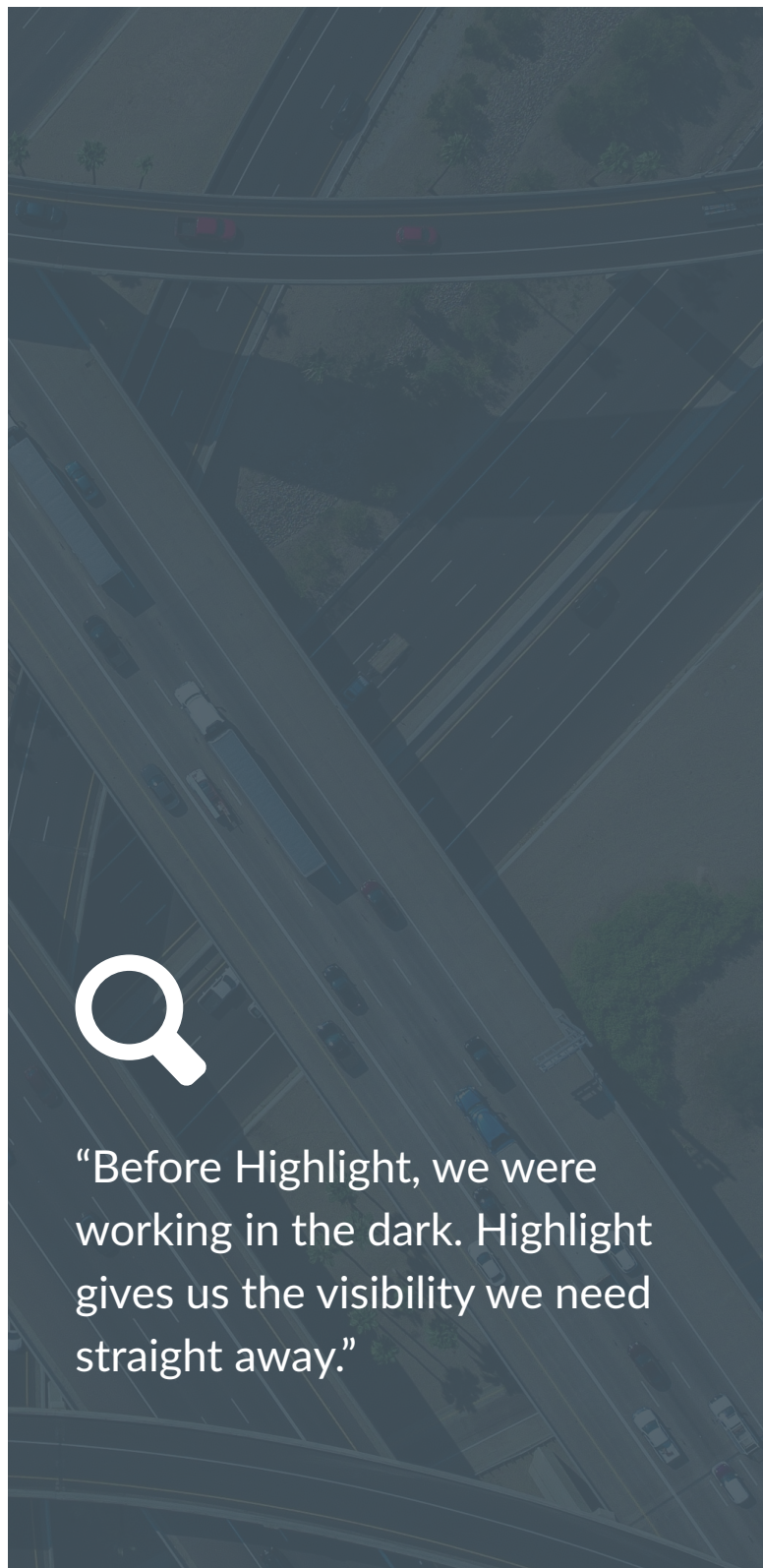
"Before Highlight, we were working in the dark. Highlight gives us the visibility we need straight away."

BENEFITS

With Highlight, Visionist is more proactive and delivers a far better service to the government department. The Visionist operations team has:

Improved infrastructure visibility by over
50%

Service levels have improved by around
25%

Proactive reach in preventing issues has improved by over
60%

The mean time to solve issues has been cut dramatically since Visionist can react far quicker.

"Alerts are immediate, and the service management team now has accurate data from Highlight on which to base the escalation of issues in an efficient way," adds Walter.

SLA reporting to senior stakeholders is now streamlined and based on accurate data.

"Highlight enables us to generate clear graphical reports for clients. In the past, producing a report on the performance of service infrastructure was extremely hard to generate and was more often based on a 'finger in the wind'. We now have accurate data to give to clients and this is provided monthly to the lead at the government department."

Visibility into the performance of third-party providers has enabled constructive feedback and significant improvements.

Walter concludes, "Highlight is a tightly-focused team – responsive and forward-looking. They've met all our requirements, including some which were definitely not out-of-the-box. Overall, they've been excellent to work with."