Claranet uses Highlight to deliver a value based service - an interview with Martin Saunders, MD, Claranet UK

Claranet is a managed services provider that has delivered IT services since 1996. We provide Network and Hosting services for our customers, enabling them to focus on their core business, not IT management.

Over the last couple of years we've specialised in providing this end to end managed service to our business customers – for example, the top hotel chain's front desks all use the same booking system connected to a data centre that runs the application - this is all managed centrally by us.

Since we control it, we can give our customers guaranteed network and application availability.

And most importantly, to prove that we deliver what we say, we also give our customers a reporting capability– and this is where we use the Highlight network monitoring system from Highlight.

Why do you need a service like Highlight?

It has become increasingly important and complex within our customers' organisations. In the past, if something went wrong, it would have been inconvenient but not crippling – now, if the network fails, it can take a business completely offline. So it's vital that they know what is going on.

We've been offering our managed service for the last three to four years. And during this time, our business customers have become more and more demanding and they require evidence of the services we deliver.

Also, the increasing expectations of IT managers and users are signs of this maturing market. End users expect a high level of service from their internal IT department – if something goes wrong, the IT manager needs to know about it before they get a call from the user and they want to respond knowledgably... with.., 'yes, we know what has gone wrong, we are already working with our service provider to resolve the issue'.

For us, as a provider – we need to be on the phone to that IT manager, telling them about an issue before their users are on the phone.

With Highlight, this information is now available to both us and our customers in an understandable and meaningful form.

Martin Saunders
Managing Director, Claranet

Why did you choose Highlight?

We use other monitoring systems internally, but the way information is presented is difficult for our customers to understand. We've also used reporting systems that provided very detailed information, but they were very disparate and often specific on the technology and applications they supported, so it was difficult to integrate together in a meaningful report for the customer.

Our customers buy our service because they don't have or don't want the experience of managing their own network or hosting infrastructure, and want to use their time for better things. We provide the information they need via Highlight.

The Highlight tool was chosen because it gives our customers a high level of granularity of information about the level of service they are getting from Claranet, all presented in a very clear and concise format. I believe Highlight is now the benchmark in the industry for this level of reporting.

How do you use it?

We've been working with Highlight for around two years. We've a good cultural fit. They are big enough to be reliable and stable, but they are also small enough to be responsive to our needs – they'll accommodate our requests for suggested new features wherever possible.

We now use the entire Highlight service and we've rebranded it as ClaraCare Vision. It is included as standard with our managed services and it enables our customers to see where things are working well and where they are not.

Highlight gives our customers real time visibility and reporting, so they can see what is happening across their whole infrastructure. They can use it as evidence to praise or question our ability to deliver their services. It also gives us an important discussion point and a basis on which we can improve and develop the services we provide.

Highlight delivers a lot of valuable evidence to both us and our customers - most of our customers are on three year contracts, but we never wait until the end of a contract to suggest improvements to our customer's service, for example where we can make the network more responsive.

What are the benefits?

In the past, our customers may not have been able to see how well our service was working. Now with Highlight, they have a clear view of what we are delivering. And as a virtual IT resource within our customers' businesses, we can show where we are highly effective and where we aren't.

This also means our customers are increasing their dependence and reliance on Claranet – and this in turn further strengthens our relationships with them.

From an internal point of view at Claranet, the fact that we can purchase Highlight as a SaaS/software as a service is very beneficial for us since it lowers the initial capital expenditure costs. This is a good fit, since we evangelise our own outsourcing model.

Our main differentiator in our market is the level of service that we provide and Highlight gives us the information that we require to ensure it's the highest quality possible.