

As the Catalina Restaurant Group gobbles up more family dining chains, the IT Group puts the network pieces together so they can keep serving up the pie

Customer Overview

In May 1996, both Carrow's and its sister chain, Coco's Bakery Restaurants, were acquired by Advantica Restaurant Group (Denny's Restaurants). In 2002, the chains were acquired by the Catalina Restaurant Group. Today, the company is fueled by a new energy and direction from a very seasoned management team overseeing the operation of more than 180 casual-dining restaurants under the Carrow's and Coco's brands. As they embark on reinventing themselves, they're also very mindful of maintaining a reputation for consistent, superior service and delicious family food.

Most of Catalina's restaurants are located in the West and Southwest. The corporate office is located in San Diego from which 70 employees and 35 field service people support the restaurants. IT Manager, Brian Christie oversees the corporate office LAN which includes 100 nodes, 10 servers and VoIP, plus a test kitchen WAN that has 30 nodes and VoIP. Each restaurant is connected via their WAN for a total of about 300 sites.

Challenge

Brian's biggest challenge as IT Manager is matching up a mix of old and new network equipment. Often times, the old equipment isn't compatible, or there are errors indicating the start of equipment failures. So it's imperative that he's able to quickly hone in on specific problems rather than his previous shotgun approach of removing everything from the network and starting from scratch.

"Fluke Networks has done a great job with the design of this little device. It's very powerful and very well thought-out,"

– Brian Christie, IT Manager,
Catalina Restaurant Group



Brian doesn't have time to unplug everything and dig through cabling bundles. He's also confronted daily with the usual end-user support requirements, plus there are always numerous adds, moves and changes with a network this size.

About 60% of the time, Brian runs in reactive mode dealing with cable runs for all the moves, server software applications, PC applications, hubs and more. Brian handles everything from cable to software issues – all while trying to keep the operation very lean. That's where the EtherScope™ Network Assistant comes into the picture – a small, power-packed tester that can provide “an extra set of eyes,” rather than having to add another dedicated IT support person.

Solution

EtherScope has taken Brian from the troubleshooting mode to trouble prevention mode. Brian is now able to regularly interrogate each switch and monitor the quality of traffic on each individual switch port. Utilizing the Switch Scan feature, he knows who is using the bandwidth, the specific connection, which cable is connected to which port, and if the person is an average user or downloading lots of data.

Another way Brian is able to anticipate and solve problems before they happen is identifying users on the network that shouldn't be there. There are numerous vendors and consultants that work for the restaurants, and they aren't allowed to connect their computers to the network. Using EtherScope's problem detection feature,



Brian can instantly see when a computer connects to the network that's not in their network's domain. He can then pinpoint what switch port they're plugged into and find out exactly where they are physically connected to the network.

Additionally, Brian can monitor and trend switch port statistics and view all the pertinent data inside the switches. He's now also able to document network attributes, baseline performance, device inventory, problems log, and switch statistics – all in web viewable files.

Response

"Fluke Networks has done a great job with the design of this little device. It's very powerful and very well thought-out," says Brian. "The way things are going with problem detection, there's an increased demand to understand our WAN links. We need to know if someone hooked their home laptop to the restaurant network, plus we'll be putting wireless into our restaurants. So I think we're set for the future with this product."





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