Australian Academic & Research Network (AARNet)

Australia's "internet backbone" gets control of its billing data with Rocket CorVu

AARNet Pty Ltd owns and maintains a complex telecommunications network that provides a 1-10 gigabit/second Internet connection to all of Australia's universities, major research groups, and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO). Rocket Software's performance management and business intelligence solutions enabled AARNet to fully automate its billing and reduce its invoicing cycle from six weeks to less than two days.

situation

AARNet is the Internet service provider for Australia's researchers and educators, providing the connection for more than 840,000 students and 100,000 university staff. The organization provides a vital link to major international research and education networks. Users are charged based on the amount of downstream traffic they receive, rather than on a flat monthly rate. This creates an enormous amount of billing-related data that needs to be compiled and analyzed by AARNet's finance professionals before an invoice can be sent; it also requires a practical way for customers to review the data to determine if the invoices are correct.

Billing is the bane of every telecommunications company, but AARNet faced unique challenges because it needs to track more than a billion flows (uploads and downloads) per day. The massive amount of data generated during this process meant that it took a significant amount of time to parse the information and prepare an invoice. This created significant risk of error inherent in using spreadsheets, and also did not provide enough visibility of the data for AARNet and its customers.
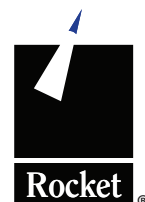
Lee Ridge, Director of Finance & Administration at AARNet, says that until recently, the organization relied on Excel spreadsheets to manage all of the usage data and prepare invoices for clients. "We have a small, but highly complex customer base, and it is important for us to provide the best possible service not only in terms of connectivity, but also in terms of billing and management. For many years we were using in-house databases and then exporting the information to Excel, and as you can imagine the spreadsheets were enormous—we needed a better solution."

implementation

AARNet decided to replace its Excel-based approach with an integrated system that would allow its billing team to view and analyze traffic-related data. AARNet looked at several well-known solutions.

> *"Our data was becoming increasingly complex and difficult to manage. CorVu solved the problem."*
>
> *-- Lee Ridge*
> *Director of Finance and Administration*
> *AARNet*

Rocket ®

"One of our people came across Rocket CorVu, and it had everything we were looking for. We selected them, and the implementation went relatively smoothly. We now have all of our data in one place, so I don't have to rely on our database expert to move numbers around—it's quick and impressive."

Subsequent to the success of the billing application, AARNet tackled the equally onerous task of managing financial forecasts. Rather than using spreadsheets, Rocket presented a more effective and efficient solution that reduced time and increased the accuracy of the forecasting process. Users around the company enter financial data via web forms against a centrally structured financial model which eliminates the complexity of consolidating disparate spreadsheets. AARNet has also used CorVu to provide reporting directly to its customers via the Web through a customer dashboard that provides live access to reports on traffic volume, network utilization, and accrued costs. This real-time feedback allows customers to better manage their Internet usage and plan for future upgrades and budgets.

benefits

According to Ridge, "Our data was extremely voluminous and complicated. CorVu fixed it. We create six gigabytes of data every day just on our traffic, and it was taking us a long time to analyze, compile, and summarize the information and create an invoice. Thanks to CorVu, we can do this in a couple of days. Needless to say, this improves cash management, which is an important benefit for any business." One of the other key advantages of the CorVu solution is that AARNet has eliminated the errors that occur when data is shifted from one system to another. "Now there is only one source of data, so there's no argument about it," Ridge says. "We know we have a system that is accurate and reliable."

CorVu has also reduced the amount of time that AARNet's staff needs to spend on billing-related work such as collating data, summarizing it in spreadsheets, and the endless checking and re-checking within these spreadsheets. Time has also been saved in responding to customer requests for information because users can also access the data directly through the CorVu dashboard.

results

Andrew Aho, Sales Executive for the Rocket performance management software, says, "AARNet has demonstrated true innovation by converting a manually intensive process into competitive advantage. Any organization with an interest in saving money, time, and labor, while simultaneously reducing errors and providing a higher quality service for their customers should contact Rocket Software to discuss how to achieve similar results to those seen at AARNet."

about rocket software

Rocket Software (www.rocketsoftware.com) is a global software development firm that builds enterprise products and delivers enterprise solutions in the following segments: Business Intelligence and Analytics; Storage, Networks, and Compliance; Application Development, Integration, and Modernization; and Database Servers and Tools. Rocket is engaged in business and technology partnerships with IBM, EMC, Fujitsu, HP Enterprise Services, Datatel, Avaya, Motorola, and many others. The company is headquartered in Newton, Massachusetts, USA.

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