



Unified Port of San Diego Enjoys Smoother Datacenter Sailing with AccelOps

The San Diego Unified Port District manages the San Diego Bay and surrounding public land which is comprised of two marine terminals handling a constant flow of cargo-ship and cruise-ship arrivals, a major airport, the largest Navy on the West coast, its own cruise ship, 16 parks and the management of over 600 commercial tenants/sub-tenants within the San Diego Waterfront. The Port also supports Homeland Security initiatives.

To keep things afloat, the Port employs an IT staff of over 18 to support its datacenter, 11 remote sites, 625 employees and 17 contractors. Similar to other mid-tier enterprises, the Port's distributed infrastructure is a mix of Microsoft, Novell, Sun, Oracle, Cisco, Citrix and VMware products. The Port had also implemented virtualization, VOIP, wireless and other technologies to meet on-going user demand.

"We have a complex environment and staying ahead of issues with modest staff was becoming unwieldy. Attempting to assess all the operational data through separate IT management tools is no longer viable or useful. We needed something to tie things together - availability, performance, security and change management. When there is a problem, regardless of security, systems or networking - it affects our services which impacts our users," said Adolfo Segura, director of IT at the Unified San Diego Port District.

The Port's network complexity, resource constraints and security threats presented issues that affected service delivery and homeland defense assurances. Among noted difficulties were how to: improve service reliability and uptime, better track resources, user and contractor activity, reduce operational and security threats, and plan further infrastructure refresh and consolidation. The Port had monitored their operations using variety of isolated tools, legacy products, and some shareware utilities.

"Tracking events meant correlating data collected in different tools, and often tracking down details to confirm when a particular event occurred. You could do it, but it would take so much time that, for us, it wasn't realistic," said Ted Evans, IT manager.

Management recognized the need to investigate newer IT management technologies that would enhance service delivery, improve IT responsiveness and better manage security risks. IT leadership began to compile key requirements that included: event consolidation and correlation, change management/inventory (CMDB), application performance, virtualization and security monitoring, and service baselining.

The Port investigated modular products from the likes of BMC, HP and CA, but the packages were cumbersome and not something that they could afford, easily implement or effectively maintain. The also analyzed current tools and available point products from HP, Solarwinds, Nimsoft, What'sUp Gold, Cisco, Novell and various log managers.

The Port determined that while a portfolio of utilities were useful, the tools were about managing and reacting to components as opposed to providing component-based details and offering business service intelligence.

"If we have an issue, different tools and persons need to be on board and spend time on the issue. None of the vendors brings all the different component details together and presents the state of IT holistically," said Ted Evans. *"Often a problem can seem like an issue across security, change management and performance. Now take that to the next level with, virtualized systems, a variety of applications, different users and contractors, and compliance mandates - the difficulty (for any organization) is maintaining services, resolving problems and governing as effectively as possible."*

The Port chose AccelOps after in-house testing against functional requirements, as well as taking into account alternative cost, deployment, integration and maintenance considerations. AccelOps collects, manages and stores large-scale data from diverse operational sources in an IT environment in a scalable fashion, and analyzes the data in real-time and historically to yield end-to-end visibility and control across availability, performance and security dimensions. They concluded that AccelOps provided more integrated functionality, monitoring depth and service insight that could be broadly applied and accepted across different teams.

Challenge

Drivers

- + Many tools but still left to user to infer true root cause
- + Service reliability and problem resolution
- + Reducing operational risks and security threats
- + Lower costs and consolidation planning

Considerations

- + Event consolidation and cross-correlation
- + Inventory/change management, CMDB
- + Performance, availability and security management
- + Business Service mapping and SLA baseline

Results

- + Complete datacenter oversight
- + IT Responsiveness - lower MTTR
- + Automated operational and security controls
- + Captured baselines, on path for SLAs
- + Rapid SaaS deployment and lowered costs

The Port downloaded the AccelOps' SaaS solution and started the discovery process leveraging AccelOps' set up wizard and broad device support. This provided a multi-factored approach to identify components, automatically populate the built-in CMDB, and continuously monitor the infrastructure. *"Given our infrastructure, more time was spent on setting up devices to talk to AccelOps, as opposed to configuring AccelOps and seeing timely results. That is the nature for any of these systems... and where we did event monitoring in the past, we simply pointed the output to AccelOps,"* added Evans.

Within a short period of time, the Port enjoyed greater visibility, could be more proactive, had more efficient root-cause analysis, and readily extended its operational and security controls. The solution centralized all the pertinent operational data including asset inventory, configurations, network and system utilization, security details and user activity. With AccelOps, the Port IT team could more effectively collaborate and gain a service-relevant view on issues, problems and threats. AccelOps puts the what, why, when, where and how, at the operator's fingertips. In addition, the system's built-in and extensible rules, dashboards and reports are associated with best practices and standards, such as PCI, Cobit and ISO. This in turn reduced the Port's operational and compliance reporting efforts, as well as investigation and audit expenditures.

Key Likes

- Ease and speed of implementation and broad device coverage
- Web GUI: easy to use, rapid results, and very extensible
- Robust component and service monitoring, baselining, alerting and reporting
- SaaS; CapEx to OpEx, on-demand scalability with reduced procurement and administration costs

Innovative Features

- Automated CMDB quickly populates infrastructure details and maintains key performance indicators and service relationships
- Drill-through dashboards, topology maps, search and reporting functionality
- Automated service-definition: bottoms-up means to identify applications and supporting components

"As far as expectations, it's a night and day comparison with the results that AccelOps provides versus what we had. We receive the network and systems monitoring functions that the other vendors provide. AccelOps brings everything together - all the asset details, changes, user activity and events. It detects operational and security anomalies and we can set thresholds and rules to be even more responsive. We have all the information in one solution to identify issues, quickly diagnose problems, and fortify compliance and planning activities - with the ability to instantly go back in time for investigations, audits and trend reporting," commented Evans.

The Port employs the AccelOps SaaS solution. An AccelOps Collector client application runs on a VMware virtual machine in their datacenter. The AccelOps Collector discovers, continuously captures and securely sends the operational data to the AccelOps datacenter where AccelOps provides 99.5% application availability, online maintenance, as well as on-demand performance and data storage capacity. *"The IT management SaaS concept is novel - but the deployment, maintenance and cost saving benefits are very real,"* said Segura.

"Many times IT staff are focused on issues at-hand and immediate projects - and they are very comfortable with their current tools. When it comes to service-level enhancements and operational controls, these topics are often something senior IT management would drive. The bigger picture is how to leverage technologies and processes that let you take broader steps to improve things from a service-level. If you want to drive process or organizational change and introduce new technologies to support that, it needs to be top level supported, if not driven.

Overall, we are very pleased with AccelOps' value and the SaaS approach is working extremely well for us. AccelOps has proven to be very interested in our needs and has gone the 'extra mile' to accommodate our requirements," concludes Segura.



AccelOps provides an integrated datacenter monitoring and cloud service management solution. The result delivers unprecedented infrastructure oversight and operational intelligence to advance service reliability and quality across availability, performance and security objectives.

See how AccelOps can help your IT accelerate business at www.accelops.net.