

TURNKEY SERVICE SIMPLIFIES NETWORK MANAGEMENT

Keller Schroeder's NetMinder solution eliminates the high cost and complexity of network management for CMC.

CMC understands the value of strong outsourcing relationships built upon customized, client-specific services. As a leading provider of credit card, debit card and merchant services for financial institutions and retailers throughout the U.S. and Canada, CMC is committed to delivering high-quality solutions that increase operating efficiencies and reduce costs for its customers.

The Evansville, Ind.-based firm expects nothing less from its business partners — that's why it turns to Keller Schroeder for its IT support needs. Keller Schroeder provides cost-effective solutions tailored to CMC's unique business requirements.

Keller Schroeder's NetMinder service is a prime example of this synergy between value and efficiency. With NetMinder, Keller Schroeder provides a network and server monitoring tool that is fully integrated with CMC's IT and business processes yet configured, maintained and supported by Keller Schroeder.

BACKGROUND

Like many organizations, CMC lacked effective tools for network monitoring, analysis and reporting. Such tools typically require

a substantial capital outlay as well as highly trained, dedicated staff to interpret the vast amount of information they provide.

“With a small IT staff, we're not in a position to spend a ton of money on tools to monitor our network components, plus have people sitting around watching them all day,” said David Smith, CIO for CMC. “We had implemented a few tools in the past but never really had the resources to utilize them effectively.”

As a result, CMC's IT team sometimes had difficulty pinpointing the root cause of network problems. More critically, the firm needed a network monitoring system that could support its Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standard (DSS) compliance initiatives.

“As a service provider, we're required to comply with the PCI Data Security Standard,” Smith said. “One of the requirements is that we store the logs that come off our network devices for up to two years, and have them available to do forensics in case of a security breach. We were looking for ways to achieve our compliance goals without completely reinvesting in our network management infrastructure.”

PROJECT DETAILS

Keller Schroeder had heard dilemmas similar to CMC's before. Many of its clients were looking for a solution that would provide network monitoring without the cost and complexity of traditional tools. Keller

SOLUTION HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Keller Schroeder's NetMinder service proves to be the ideal solution for CMC's network monitoring needs.
- ◆ Fully customized network and server monitoring tool integrates with CMC's infrastructure and meets business and regulatory requirements.
- ◆ Turnkey solution is installed, configured and maintained by Keller Schroeder; CMC gets the benefits of robust network monitoring without the typical costs or learning curve.
- ◆ CMC's IT team gains new insight into network issues and can manage their infrastructure more proactively.



Schroeder's network engineers have significant experience utilizing open-source network management tools — NetMinder bundles the tools and the expertise to create a turnkey network management solution.

“We recognized that a lot of clients don't have the time or the expertise to implement the tools that are available,” said Jeff Gorman, Business Unit Director for Keller Schroeder. “We identified the strongest tools available and created a service in which we install, configure and manage the server and applications. We also help customers develop best practices for network management. Our clients get the benefit of the output these tools provide without having to invest the time and energy to actually configure them and keep them current.”

Keller Schroeder was familiar with CMC's environment, and understood the PCI DSS demands. The firm met with CMC's IT staff to discuss their network monitoring requirements, and then customized the NetMinder solution to meet those needs and goals.

“Our capabilities are very flexible and scalable. We have several scripts that we've written that enable us to customize the polling and reporting,” Gorman said. “We can do that fairly quickly to keep the entry point low, and yet tailor the solution to each environment.”

PROJECT RESULTS

Keller Schroeder worked closely with CMC to establish resource utilization thresholds that would trigger alerts. Although CMC's infrastructure was very stable, the NetMinder solution gave the IT team insight into areas that could become problematic down the road. As a result, they are able to more proactively manage their environment to prevent unplanned downtime.

“Now if we have a problem we have data to look at that can help us figure out what's wrong,” Smith said. “Before, we often would treat symptoms — such as rebooting the server if it went down — without really solving the problem.”

Best of all, CMC was able to achieve its

network management goals cost-effectively, without hiring additional staff or distracting existing personnel from their day-to-day objectives. Smith says the key benefit of NetMinder is the expertise Keller Schroeder adds to the solution.

“The cost of the service was a huge plus for us — it was very affordable compared to a lot of the other tools we had looked at. And we didn't have to learn how to set up the tool and manage and maintain it. KSA does all that for us, and they're on hand to modify the solution as our requirements change,” he said.

STRATEGIC BENEFITS

For CMC, NetMinder solves the network management conundrum. What's more, Keller Schroeder can easily customize NetMinder without incurring significant engineering and programming costs, overcoming a key limitation of shrink-wrapped solutions.

Gorman also points out that NetMinder is distinct from “lights out” managed services offerings in which a third party remotely monitors the network and responds to alerts. NetMinder is installed at the customer's site, and alerts are directed to the customer's IT staff. It fills the network management gap without requiring customers to relinquish control. This was critical for CMC; because it handles sensitive consumer information, CMC needed to ensure that all data remained within its security infrastructure.

With a nine-person technology group and 11-person programming group supporting about 300 employees, CMC takes a pragmatic approach to IT. The firm invests in the technology solutions and staff that help support its business strategy, and looks to Keller Schroeder to fill any resource gaps.

“We're a midsized company with a small IT staff,” said Smith. “We've used Keller Schroeder for everything from network support to server support to programming support over the years. They have a very good name in this area and the resources they bring to bear on a project are always exceptional. And NetMinder has been a great tool for us.”

Founded in 1978, Keller Schroeder is an employee-owned information technology consulting services firm, and a value-added reseller and systems integrator of hardware and software products. As a “technology company in the performance improvement business,” their skilled practice areas include:

- ◆ IT Consulting
- ◆ Websites/Intranets/Extranets
- ◆ Application Development and Integration
- ◆ Network Infrastructure
- ◆ Unified Communications (VoIP)
- ◆ Security Assessments
- ◆ Network and Server Monitoring
- ◆ Technical Staffing

For additional information about Keller Schroeder, visit us at: www.kellerschroeder.com.