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5 Questions You Should Ask to "Detect & Fix" App and Network Performance Issues Faster

Selecting the right network performance management solution to help you "detect & fix" problems faster doesn't have to be difficult. These five questions should help simplify your decision-making process.

1 How many business-critical applications do you have and how quickly do you need to troubleshoot them when they're slow?

Determining the types and number of business-critical applications your business uses every day can help you to narrow your focus when selecting a performance management vendor. Focus on how fast you need to Detect and Fix network and application problems—maybe even before they impact your users. Just finding all the applications running RIGHT NOW across you network can often lead to some unexpected discoveries and insights. For example, shadow IT apps that your users have downloaded and are being used on an ad hoc basis could be consuming more bandwidth than you anticipated. SteelCentral network performance management (NPM), in conjunction with SteelHead application acceleration, can help by **quickly and automatically identifying all the applications on your network**—business and recreational—so you can effectively troubleshoot, plan for growth, and police the network, if necessary.
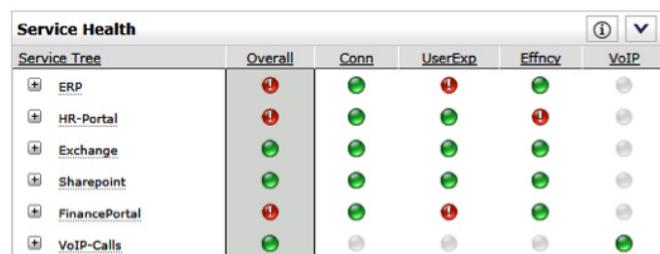

Figure 1
Service Dashboard in SteelCentral NetProfiler displays at-a-glance health of all your critical business services.

2 Do you have the ability to guarantee the performance of your business-critical applications?

Business-critical applications that are being crowded out by a couple of individuals in your branch office listening to streaming radio can cause a slowdown that you cannot afford to endure. You caught and stopped them this time, but how do you prevent this from happening again? If you are using SteelHeads to optimize the branch traffic, you could implement QoS to make sure latency-sensitive apps like VoIP and video get top priority, business-critical apps come next, and recreational apps are delegated to the best-effort category. But is that enough? How do you make sure that QoS is working as expected—that your VoIP phones in the sales office aren't experiencing jitter because someone accidently mismarked the local router? **Only SteelCentral NPM provides centralized reporting and monitoring of SteelHead QoS classes and sites to ensure proper categorization and easy troubleshooting.**
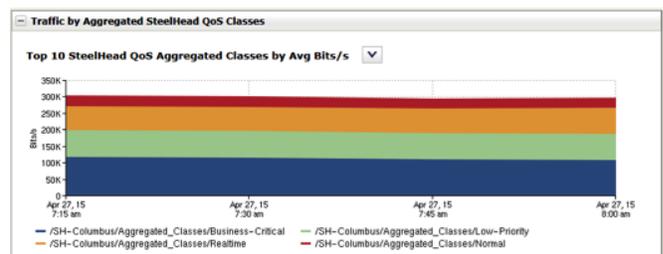

Figure 2
NetProfiler can report on how much traffic is in each SteelHead QoS class as well as the specific applications make up that traffic.

3 Do you have the necessary resources to devote to the day-to-day operation of your business-critical applications?

Balancing strategic projects with day-to-day operational needs is challenging at the best of times. Throw in a few "fires" to put out and the best laid plans go by the wayside. Establishing your solution requirements for troubleshooting and fixing application slowdowns and outages—for example, focusing on gaining comprehensive visibility of your most business-critical applications—is crucial in ensuring that you get the best "fit" for your business goals. Be sure to think up front about factoring in any needed implementation services, as well as ongoing maintenance and other support.

Riverbed Professional Services offers a full complement of training, implementation, and ad hoc consulting services. You can also engage resident consultants to fill-in any people or skills gaps that you might currently be experiencing.

4 What will your business need from IT to handle growth and future business goals?

No business can, or at least should, remain static for long. Therefore, as with any solution that you plan to keep for a while, you should plan not only for what you need now, but also what need in the foreseeable future. A good place to start is to understand the trends of overall application consumption and bandwidth usage. You need to get a handle on historical data for which apps are being consumed, by whom, where in the network (for example, branches vs. data centers or cloud), and by what type of networks (MPLS, Internet, and with or without VPN). This will show you how scalable a solution you're going to need in order to keep a close watch over how those applications get delivered to the business.

SteelCentral works with SteelHead to deliver analysis and reporting of the benefits achieved through WAN optimization and to identify additional sites that could benefit. Together they help troubleshoot performance issues in remote offices without the need to send expensive IT resources onsite and provide visibility for making good decisions about when to select one network path versus another to help balance the tradeoff between performance and cost.

5 What is comprehensive end-to-end application visibility worth to your business?

Of course, the answer to this question can be quite complicated. For example, even if you don't want to pay for a robust, full-featured troubleshooting solution, you will still need to figure in the costs of your IT people's time (and it's never just one person, there's usually a "war room" full of people!) and effort to do the job manually. A complete ROI analysis also needs to include the costs and risks associated with slow or unavailable applications, which in many cases may directly impact revenue, sway employee and customer satisfaction, or damage your business reputation. Will the "cheaper" solution really be cheaper if it can't help find the problem and help you get your application running at full speed quickly?
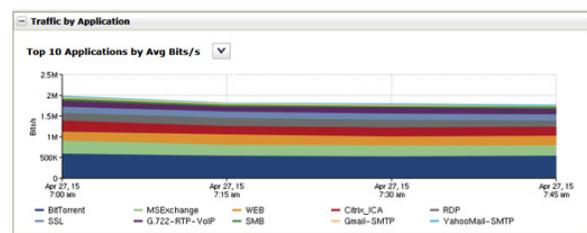
Figure 3
SteelCentral NetShark and SteelHead automatically recognize more than 1300 business and recreational applications so you know what's running on your network. In this case, BitTorrent is using one-fifth of the bandwidth!
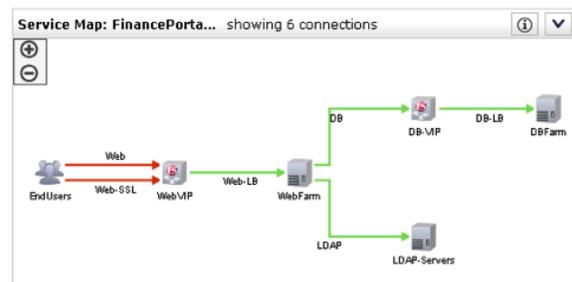
Figure 4
NetProfiler's Service Maps map application transactions to their underlying infrastructure to offer an accurate understanding of end-to-end performance.

To find out how your organization can benefit from adding SteelCentral, check out our online interactive ROI calculator.

About Riverbed

Riverbed, at more than $1 billion in annual revenue, is the leader in application performance infrastructure, delivering the most complete platform for the hybrid enterprise to ensure applications perform as expected, data is always available when needed, and performance issues can be proactively detected and resolved before impacting business performance. Riverbed enables hybrid enterprises to transform application performance into a competitive advantage by maximizing employee productivity and leveraging IT to create new forms of operational agility. Riverbed's 26,000+ customers include 97% of the *Fortune* 100 and 98% of the *Forbes* Global 100. Learn more at riverbed.com.

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