Case Study

Bull's Remote Maintenance Strategy Achieves Peak Performance Worldwide

Perle's Access Server Provides the Key

The Challenge:
Bull Worldwide's hardware R&D group in Phoenix, Arizona designed and developed the company's new DPS 9000 platform. Key to the project was a strategy for worldwide remote maintenance: the company wanted to consolidate its maintenance technicians in just two locations and provide its customers with full support anywhere in the world.

The Solution:
The development team chose to intergrate the Perle 833-4E, a feature-rich, 4-port Ethernet remote access server with the DPS 9000. With its Windows-based manager software, the Perle 833 can be installed and managed from anywhere on the network and then accessed remotely by Bull maintenance technicians.

The Benefits:
As a key element of Bull's new remote maintenance strategy, Perle's Remote Access Solution gives the company a much more flexible remote capability. It also gives Bull customers the ability to run their systems remotely, which they weren't able to do until now.

THE CUSTOMER:
Bull Worldwide is a $4.3+ billion company, with global headquarters in Les Clayes, France. The company's worldwide software division is headquartered in Billerica, Massachusetts. Bull's offerings include infrastructure, managed services, consulting and systems integration, with a focus on the Internet and e-commerce.

THE CHALLENGE:
Bull's hardware R&D group in Phoenix, Arizona was responsible for the design and development of Olympus, Bull's new DPS 9000 platform, which offers double the processing power of its predecessor at lower cost. With the DPS 9000, customers can now harness the well-known reliability of a Bull mainframe for sophisticated new e-business applications: Customer Relationship Management (CRM), e-commerce, data warehousing, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), and more.

As Bull Worldwide supplies high-end systems to customers in more than 100 countries, a key design element for the Olympus project was a strategy for worldwide remote maintenance. The company wanted to consolidate its maintenance technicians in just two locations and provide its customers with full support anywhere in the world.

The design goal was to provide Bull's technicians with direct access to a customer's Olympus mainframe, and all the components in it. Remote access is the key to remote maintenance. So, to implement the strategy, Bull needed a reliable, high-performance Remote Access Server.

THE SOLUTION:
The Perle 833-4E Remote Server
After evaluating the remote access products of several major suppliers, the development team decided on a turnkey solution from Perle. The Perle 833-4E is a feature-rich, 4-port Ethernet remote access server. With its Windows-based manager software, the Perle 833 can be installed and managed from anywhere on the network and then accessed remotely for maintenance and support purposes. It offers dial-out modem pooling functionality with auto-queuing and auto-dial features, enabling LAN-based users to send faxes or dial-out to the Internet or other on-line services.

Helpful and Knowledgeable
"Perle offered the most flexible solution with all the functionality we required," says Jim Smith, manager of Bull's new systems server processor team in Phoenix. "They also provided excellent engineering support from their headquarters, and the local people were very helpful and knowledgeable."

Worldwide Support
Perle's worldwide support was also a key benefit to Bull. Phoenix and Les Clayes, France are home to Bull's centralized maintenance facilities. These locations, nine time zones apart, provide effective 24/ 7 coverage for most of Bull's customer base. "The presence of Perle engineers in the same, or adjacent time zones in England, France and North America was an important selling point," says DeAnn Dalry, Perle's V.P. of North America sales.

Top-Level Security
Security was another factor high on the priority list. Perle's multi-level network security features, which include Native NT Domain Server Authentication, Password Authentication Protocol (PAP), and Challenge Handshake Authentication Protocol (CHAP), met all of Bull's requirements.

Remote Maintenance in Action
So, how does Bull's remote maintenance strategy work? In the event of an Olympus CPU failure, the system's Service Processor, which monitors both the mainframe and its surrounding environment, can take immediate corrective actions when appropriate. It can also create an Auto-Call, connecting via the Perle 833 Access Server to the Bull Maintenance Center in Phoenix.

Valuable Diagnostic Data
Once the Perle 833 receives the incoming call and security validation, diagnostic data is available to maintenance experts immediately. What once might have taken several hours, now takes only minutes because the Perle 833's ability to maintain a high access rate, coupled with today's high-speed modems, significantly shortens download time

Functionality Gives Flexibility
"We consider the Perle 833 Access Server a very important element of our new remote maintenance strategy," says Smith. "Its functionality gives us a much more flexible remote capability than we had in the past." It also gives Bull customers the benefit of very rapid remote response from Bull's maintenance services, which was not available until now.