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Manageable SAN Helping to Keep AH-64 Apache Attack Helicopters Aloft

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REVIEWER: Margo White, Boeing UNIX system administrator for Mesa Arizona Data Center.

BACKGROUND: The Boeing Company is the world's leading aerospace company and the largest manufacturer of satellites, commercial jetliners and military aircraft including the Apache Attack Helicopter. Boeing is the largest U.S. exporter by sales and posted 2002 revenues of \$54 billion.

PLATFORMS: UNIX servers, McDATA Intrepid 6064 Directors, HP StorageWorks Disk Arrays XP256 and XP512.

PROBLEM SOLVED: The McDATA SAN solution operates seamlessly in Boeing's heterogeneous environment to protect our investment in legacy devices. McDATA's SANavigator SAN management tool replaced a labor-intensive asset management spreadsheet tool with one that dynamically keeps things up to date. SANavigator also gave us visibility into the SAN's utilization performance to help us make better IT budget decisions. It also creates customized reports that management finds valuable. On the hardware side, we upgraded our SAN network core availability with the Intrepid Director.

PRODUCT FUNCTIONALITY: I use SANavigator daily to monitor SAN traffic, respond to device failure alarms and manage my SAN assets. Monthly, I produce detailed utilization reports for management. The policy engine allows me to automate many functions, such as report generation and asset management reports for disaster recovery, set threshold limits for alarms and set alerts for different situations with hardware on the SAN (servers and storage). SANavigator cut my administration time in half, and I'm using those 250 hours per year on other important projects. From an ROI perspective, I was able to postpone a proposed \$340,000 equipment retrofit for fibre channel cards on existing UNIX servers. The Intrepid Director 6064 has delivered on its availability promises.

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We've had zero downtime because of it.

STRENGTHS: SANavigator is far superior to spreadsheets as an asset management tool. It dynamically updates devices and connections to give me up-to-the-moment accuracy. Knowing what assets are being utilized by whom is a big plus in administering our network proactively. The Intrepid 6064 Director is a stable, predictable performer. You can buy it half-populated as we did and expand its capability in four port increments as you need it, without any downtime. The Intrepid Director was also interoperable with our legacy non-McDATA fibre channel switches, which allowed us to re-deploy those switches to our network edge with the Intrepid Director at the core. This capability ensured our investment in those legacy switches would be protected as we upgraded to the ultra-high availability McDATA SAN solution.

WEAKNESSES: SANavigator has performed as advertised, meeting all my criteria. We're looking to upgrade to version 3.5 once we have completed a series of firmware upgrades. Perhaps an even closer relationship between McDATA and our global storage provider on interoperability testing would help expedite delivery and implementation. The Intrepid Director 6064 has been rock solid with no failures or downtime.

SELECTION CRITERIA: After reviewing a number of products for SAN management, I went with SANavigator because of its sophisticated asset management tool and lower administration time. SANavigator also does not require installation of a client piece of software on all the hosts on the SAN. It also gives visibility into our SAN utilization and creates great reports that management likes. For the Intrepid Director, we sought high availability and interoperability with legacy devices.

DELIVERABLES: I print out utilization reports to optimize the SAN. SANavigator also creates a nice map of the environment including devices and their connections and a spreadsheet of our SAN assets, which we use as a deliverable for disaster recovery. Enterprise Fabric Connectivity Manager, also McDATA Software, runs our Intrepid Directors. I have it as a client on my desktop where it runs SNMP traps and allows me to remotely monitor the SAN environment or plan upgrades and changes to the fabrics. Among other things, I get reports when people reboot servers, when one of the Directors has an event or the management laptop has a problem and when traffic threshold limits are reached as well.

VENDOR SUPPORT: The people at McDATA gave me great pre-implementation support. I found they had a very high level of technical knowledge about their products. They were able to accurately describe in detail how the SAN solution was going to fit into our environment and how it would operate after implementation. I haven't needed much in the way of post-implementation support

because SANavigator and the Directors have been running so well and because the software has been so easy to use and install. It's been great working with the folks at McDATA.

DOCUMENTATION: I've found the documentation to be straightforward and easy to understand. The SANavigator application is pretty intuitive and easy to use.

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Margo White, Boeing UNIX system administrator for Mesa Arizona Data Center.

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