



## Mobistar Case Study



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**Eddy Straetmen**  
Network Manager  
Mobistar

### Fast-Moving Telecommunications

With close to 3 million mobile customers and a network covering almost 99% of the Belgian population, Mobistar is one of the fastest-growing mobile operators in Europe. A subsidiary of Orange, S.A., Mobistar offers fixed telephony, Internet VPN and DSL, and other data transmission services as well.

The company's internal network, which links offices and data centers throughout Belgium via a high-speed WAN backbone, supports business applications such as billing and customer service that are critical to Mobistar's success. Although the WAN was well-instrumented with device-oriented solutions such as HP OpenView and Infovista, which gave a

clear view of device and link health, Mobistar lacked insight into the details of application and server performance. "When users complained, our WAN tools might show all green," explains Eddy

Straetman, a network manager in the company's IP & Security Networks department. "The links were up and running properly, but something wasn't right, and we couldn't find it quickly."

IT staff had long relied on "sniffer-like" products to troubleshoot such problems, but they couldn't provide historical data, required

Eddy and others to have a pretty good idea of where the problem was before troubleshooting it, and couldn't furnish any business context. "We didn't know how many users were experiencing the same problem, or who they were except for the ones that complained," Eddy explains.

### Finding the Devil in the Details

After researching a number of solutions, Mobistar decided to deploy a distributed ACE Live solution comprising three ACE Live appliances at key locations on the WAN, coordinated by an ACE Live at the main data center. The Director not only aggregates data from all the appliances to deliver a global overview of the network, but also serves as a central management point, distributing configuration data to all the appliances.

"A few hours after installation," comments Eddy, "we were able to start analyzing traffic end-to-end and could begin to deal with our first problems. There was value right out of the box."

That value increased as the staff loaded their IP address assignment data into the ACE Live to create Business Groups, along with application definitions (by port/protocol, server, and/or URL) to augment those supplied with ACE Live. The Business Groups and Applications created gave Eddy and the other network professionals the ability to monitor over 60 performance, utilization, route quali-



### Mobistar Problems

- Inability to quickly troubleshoot performance problems
- No real-time overview of WAN: who's talking to whom, what applications.
- Too much time fire-fighting, no time for new business-critical IT projects

### ACE Live Solution

- A distributed ACE Live solution
- Monitor performance and utilization for all critical applications and links
- Real-time and historical view of a wide range of application and network metrics

### Mobistar Benefits

- Much faster problem localization and resolution across the WAN
- Real-time overview of network and application activity for all locations
- Avoiding equipment upgrade by detecting subtle misconfiguration issues
- More time for business-critical IT projects, improved IT support for business strategy

ty, and user experience metrics in the context of what business units, resources (e.g. server clusters) and application were affected. "We could see immediately if the problem a user was complaining about was widespread or not, and who and what it was affecting. This really helped us prioritize our response."

### Knowing What You Don't Know

The IT department now found itself in command of a depth of insight into network and application performance that enabled them to identify a number of subtle problems that had resisted resolution for some time. "Once we had all the Business Groups identified, we knew just who was talking to who," says Eddy. "Using the topology displays, we could see which groups of users were connecting to various servers, and what kind of performance they were getting. Then we could drill down into the details. This enabled us, for instance, to identify a subtle server misconfiguration that slowed down email for everyone. Fixing the problem was like a server upgrade in terms of the performance improvement, so it was a real money saver."

### A Multi-Purpose Tool

In general, the IT staff at Mobistar uses the ACE Live solution to head off application and server problems, or troubleshoot them when users complain, as well as for historical analysis of load and response for network forecasting and planning purposes.

"If someone like me asked why they should look at ACE Live, comments Eddy, "I'd tell them that it's a combination of things. The user interface is really intuitive, and lets me really drill down and leverage my networking

knowledge for rapid problem resolution, which leaves me more time for the forward-looking projects management wants completed. And the historical depth of the data is amazing: it gives me one-minute averages for several days—just what I need for troubleshooting—and then automatically condenses it to longer time averages to save space. I can keep nearly a year's worth of data for planning and forecasting—and the box knows what I think is important, so it keeps that data longer."

For more information,  
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