

UNIFY²

CASE STUDY

Microsoft Taps PowerSuite™ Monitoring Solution for End-to-End Visibility Across Worldwide Skype for Business Network

Perennially recognized as one of the world's most valuable brands, Microsoft has empowered businesses around the globe for over 40 years with software, services and hardware that deliver new opportunities, greater convenience and enhanced productivity. To develop, deliver and support its vast array of enterprise-class products and services, Microsoft IT must provide seamless global communications for nearly 200,000 employees, contractors and vendors on a daily basis. Supporting this massive user base is a 16-person IT team that specifically oversees global service delivery and availability of Skype for Business (SfB).

In preparation for the worldwide rollout of a new version of Skype for Business (at the time known as Lync) in mid-2013, Microsoft IT understood that a successful upgrade and deployment depended heavily on end user satisfaction. If employees couldn't make calls, reliably join conferences or use other features, then the initiative would stall. To effectively manage and resolve system incidents, IT needed a solution that could provide accurate, end-to-end visibility across its global network in real-time. With that in mind, Microsoft chose the Unify Square Service Availability Monitoring solution – formerly known as PowerMon – which today is part of PowerSuite™, Unify Square's purpose-built, Unified Communications (UC) operations suite for Skype for Business.

The Pains of Being Big

Microsoft's IT environment is one of constant change. "Unlike other enterprises, we don't have the luxury to create a uniform environment where every employee uses the same software version or to test all programs and applications for compatibility," said Jonathan Claire, Skype for Business engineer lead for Microsoft IT. With over one million devices connected to its data network every day, the amount of daily change within the company's IT environment was a significant strain on its Skype for

Business network. As Microsoft began its transition to the next version of SfB, the large influx of daily variability inevitably resulted in service instability that caused a rise in the volume of incidents.

Prior to partnering with Unify Square, IT leveraged out-of-the-box Server Monitoring Services that provided a basic level of SfB service availability monitoring. Though useful in identifying incidents, the reports could not prioritize issues or detect outages that occurred on dependent infrastructure, including the data network, telephony gateways and TDM services which complete a functioning UC-based service. Ultimately, this process lacked the scalability and reach IT needed to filter through the noise, and address priority escalations.

Adding to the complexity of the situation was the issue of server maintenance. While Microsoft hosts its own Skype for Business deployment, the IT team responsible for SfB service delivery does not have oversight of the specific server environment that houses the solution. In essence, the solution is outsourced to an internal service provider. As a result, the team lacked real-time visibility into its Skype for Business network, and had to rely on engineers from the Skype for Business product group to relay incident-related information, leading to longer issue awareness and resolution times.

"PowerSuite has been a big win for Microsoft, because our team can see major incidents well before user escalations as well as before the number of impacted users grows. Now we are almost always ahead of the game, instead of behind." said Jonathan Claire, Skype for Business engineer lead for Microsoft IT"

Proactive versus Reactive

In the midst of rolling out the next version of Skype for Business, Microsoft IT was presented with the opportunity to be an early adopter of PowerSuite's Service Availability Monitoring solution. With early access to this synthetics-based monitoring solution, Microsoft was in the unique position to experience the power of real-time, end-to-end visibility across its worldwide SfB network, while providing insightful feedback to Unify Square to help guide and fine tune the development of the final product.

Upon implementing PowerSuite monitoring, Microsoft IT realized immediate benefits. The team could easily oversee the quality and reliability of SfB both end-to-end and in real-time with the help of rules and scenarios they created for ongoing synthetic-based testing of their UC deployment. Through this process, IT had the flexibility to target and test specific core functionalities, such as user sign in ability, making peer to peer and PSTN calls, and joining conferences. The system would then proactively alert IT of incidents, as well as prioritize incidents based on the number of users impacted, without having to engage the operations team that oversaw the actual servers.

Rather than being limited to lagging indicator reports that only listed the last system failures or, even worse, user escalations, IT now had a single dashboard view with live alerts showing what went wrong in the environment and guided solutions for resolution. This functionality also added unexpected value when IT performed proactive changes. Once changes were implemented, PowerSuite quickly and automatically validated that the changes resulted in the expected level of impact within their established service windows, and confirmed that all services were correctly restored.

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Impactful Results

For nearly three years, Microsoft has relied on PowerSuite to effectively and efficiently monitor Skype for Business service availability. With the help of PowerSuite:

- Over a single six month period, Microsoft IT caught 12 major Skype for Business incidents, significantly decreasing the total time to incident resolution. By pinpointing the root cause of problems with greater accuracy, IT could quickly engage the appropriate stakeholders for faster resolution.
- Incident resolutions were instituted with greater speed and precision as a result of leveraging intelligence from PowerSuite's prescriptive guidance for Skype for Business environments. The solution provided engineers with direction on where to start or how to resolve issues.
- IT gained an easily obtained, reliable metric to convey Skype for Business service availability to senior executives via their IT Service Scorecard.
- Service managers and engineers could focus on forward facing strategy rather than being bogged down in escalations.
- IT not only had an early warning system, but also a final signal of incident resolution once green lights were shown after changes were made to SfB via the PowerSuite dashboard.

About Unify Square

Unify Square's software, consulting and smart remote managed services power up your Microsoft Skype for Business deployment, unlocking better visibility, end user satisfaction, and ROI. Built on innovative technology, our solutions create actionable insights and provide an end-to-end leg up on SfB setup & transformations, daily operations, and continuous improvement. Founded by former SfB product visionaries, Unify Square is a member of the SfB Partner Advisory Council, and one of Microsoft's global elite partners. Unify Square services have impacted over 5 million SfB seats, in more than 275 global enterprises in over 50 countries and provide solutions for most major industry verticals. From large-scale global successes, we have gotten to know the most common headaches and the best remedies. This insight fuels our expertise, expands our services, and increases the benefits we can deliver to your enterprise.

We are headquartered in Bellevue, Washington with offices in the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, India, Singapore, and Australia. We invite you to learn more.

Contact sales@unifysquare.com or visit unifysquare.com.

