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Proactively Monitoring Remote Call Center Agent Performance With NETSCOUT nGeniusEDGE

Despite the announced intentions of corporate leaders, many return-to-office plans formulated around the mid-stage of the COVID-19 pandemic were disrupted by the arrival of new variants and open-ended organizational needs.

This Use Case focuses on how one information technology operations (IT Operations) team applied experiences from their company's initial hybrid workforce transition to enhance visibility into the remote client edge by introducing NETSCOUT nGeniusEDGE monitoring.

Issue

The company's initial hybrid workforce transition involved tens of thousands of employees moving to work-from-home (WFH) environments, with this population including most of their Call Center Agents (CCAs). As the CCAs were regionally distributed, in essence, the company's Call Center operations had moved out of centralized corporate facilities and into many individual employee WFH offices, which became the new client edge. This resulted in the CCA team accessing an array of business services from their home offices, directly over the company's virtual private network (VPN), via the VMware SD-WAN connection to their local internet service provider (ISP) links, including:

- A Unified Communications & Collaboration (UC&C) ecosystem that incorporated Slack messaging, Zoom videoconferencing, and a legacy Microsoft Skype conferencing application for internal communications
- Virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) deployment
- Essential service enablers, such as Okta identity management, DNS, and LDAP
- Internal employee Web portal and Webmail services

Complicating this scenario for IT Operations was the sustained increase in daily call volume these CCAs were now managing, with many customers taking advantage of Contact Center resources to replace in-person business exchanges. This combination of factors left IT Operations working in a responsive mode to address CCA-related Help Desk tickets.

Like many companies, when it appeared the pandemic had subsided, corporate leadership took the opportunity to return workers to corporate locations. As CCAs temporarily returned to the on-premises Contact Center environments, IT Operations wanted to revisit their service edge visibility strategy to determine whether CCA operations could be better visualized and monitored in the future in WFH environments.

Impact

IT Operations would soon be presented with an opportunity to revisit this performance challenge when the company announced it was returning a hybrid workforce model. That decision would result in their high-volume CCAs returning to WFH offices the following week.

This time around, IT Operations wanted to assure remote CCAs did not experience drop-offs in business service access or continuity as a result of this hybrid workforce transition. Bottom line, when voice services or access to customer account information is disrupted, customer service, revenue, and CCA productivity are all at risk.

Troubleshooting

Based on the earlier successes with NETSCOUT®, IT Operations enhanced their nGeniusONE® investment by incrementally expanding visibility into work-from-home CCA operations with the nGenius®EDGE Server. nGeniusEDGE Server provided an all-in-one platform that included nGeniusONE software, nGenius®PULSE software, vSTREAM®, and licenses to collect Synthetic tests, including Business Transaction Tests (BTTs), from virtual nPoint devices for smart Adaptive Service Intelligence® (ASI) analysis in nGeniusONE.

As part of this solution, IT Operations quickly deployed individual virtual nGeniusPULSE nPoint sensors on each of the CCAs' laptops. Using these software-based agents, IT Operations began running BTTs to assess CCA experience in WFH environments, with these synthetic tests simulating user actions in accessing business services and applications.

In refining the scope of troubleshooting activities, IT Operations collaborated with their contracted NETSCOUT Premium Service Engineer (PSE) to develop custom BTTs to pinpoint problematic performance in the CCA's individual WFH environments. The nPoint-conducted BTT results were analyzed and viewed in the nGeniusPULSE dashboard. The nGeniusPULSE dashboard exhibited in Figure 1 identifies the BTTs configured by application down the Y-axis and for each of the agents across the X-axis.

As a result, the IT Operations team was provided a snapshot that showed several CCAs were experiencing potentially degraded performance from UC&C (i.e., Slack and Skype), VDI, SD-WAN, and service enablers (e.g., LDAP and DNS).
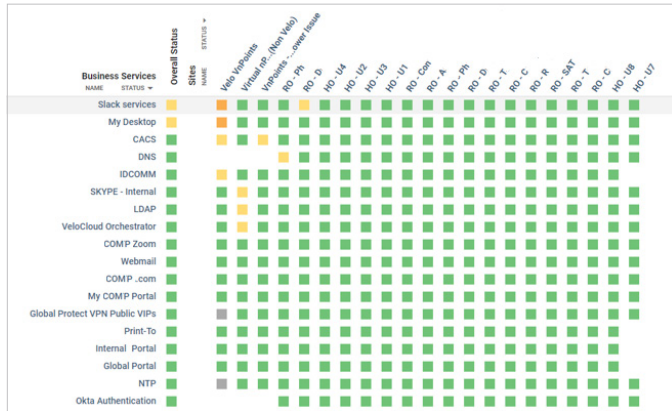

Figure 1: The nGeniusPULSE Dashboard yielded a precise assessment of per-CCA experience on business service and connectivity solutions operating in certain WFH environments.

By contextually drilling from each of these impacted business services and connectivity solutions, the results of nPoint service tests showed broader effects of VMware SD-WAN performance degradations, with 40 percent of CCAs impacted, as exhibited in Figure 2.
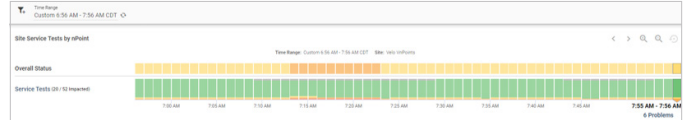

Figure 2: This nGeniusPULSE Dashboard showed a granular view into the scope of VMware SD-WAN performance issues in the context of overall status and impacted CCAs.

By consulting the nGeniusPULSE Service Log exhibited in Figure 3, IT Operations pinpointed those CCAs as being impacted by underperforming SD-WAN connectivity services at the client edge of the remote network.
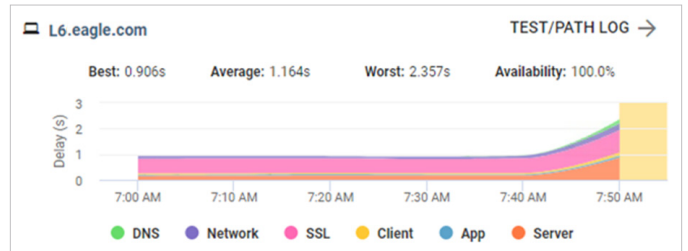

Figure 3: This nGeniusPULSE application view displayed the results of tests assessing SD-WAN performance for impacted CCAs.

Remediation

In this instance, the nGeniusPULSE dashboard views prompted IT Operations to examine client configurations of the impacted CCAs and make any necessary VMware SD-WAN changes to restore a high-quality user experience for those WFH users.

Available nGeniusONE service dashboard and monitor views enabled IT Operations to visualize this SD-WAN performance issue in the context of their standard troubleshooting and reporting workflows.

Summary

IT Operations teams like this one are often required to stay ahead of emerging technical challenges in sustaining WFH and remote business environments.

As seen in this Use Case, the nGeniusEDGE Server enables IT Operations teams to proactively monitor the quality of user experience and business service delivery necessary to accelerate the employee productivity gains, customer service advancements, and financial performance success realized by so many organizations during the ongoing hybrid workforce transformation.

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