

## Digital media publishing provider thePlatform improves its understanding of what is happening on its network with Fluke Networks' NetFlow Tracker and ResponseWatch

### At a Glance

**Industry:**

Digital media publishing solution provider

**Location:**

Seattle, Washington, USA

**Network Type:**

LAN network

**Challenge:**

Improve understanding of what was happening on its network, particularly as it started implementing inter-VLAN Access Control Lists (ACLs) so that system administrators can control and limit how servers and clients intercommunicate.

**Solution:**

thePlatform ultimately decided to purchase NetFlow Tracker and ResponseWatch. NetFlow Tracker is a part of the regular network monitoring toolbox.

**Results:**

NetFlow Tracker helps thePlatform ensure no critical application is accidentally blocked or denied and ResponseWatch helps thePlatform be proactive instead of reactive.

**Products:**

- NetFlow Tracker
- ResponseWatch

### Overview

thePlatform is an industry-leading provider of digital media publishing solutions. thePlatform was founded in 2000 and is headquartered in Seattle, Washington, USA. The company's flagship product, thePlatform Media Publishing System (MPS), is the industry's most comprehensive solution for media, entertainment and enterprise customers. With MPS, customers can publish digital media (Windows Media, Flash, MPEG-4, Real, QuickTime) anywhere – over any network, to any device. thePlatform MPS works like an API that can be tied into by its customers for DRM processing – the management of content and digital assets.

Prior to joining thePlatform, senior network architect, Rob Sherrard, had already used NetFlow Monitor. The same network redesign he had worked on before joining thePlatform turned out to be applicable there as well. So he started a comparative evaluation between Cisco and another high-end hardware vendor. Sherrard comments: "While the competitor's hardware was almost as good as Cisco's, where they excelled was in their network monitoring capabilities, enabling us to find out the who, what, when and where on the network."

With a preference for Cisco hardware if the monitoring issue could be resolved, Sherrard went back to Cisco to get more information on its NetFlow technology. Most Cisco technology partners appeared to be focused on the high-end enterprise, with correspondingly costly solutions, but reading through a NetFlow whitepaper, Sherrard found a reference to NetFlow Tracker. "I immediately thought: 'Wow, this is a really cool product and it runs in Windows – we're a Windows shop – and it seems to do anything and everything I could ever want.' "

### Execution

thePlatform ultimately decided to purchase ResponseWatch as well as NetFlow Tracker. Sherrard explains: "Where I was working previously, we had a pair of Cisco 4506s, similar to the Cisco 6509s we have at thePlatform. 4506s are quite limited in their NetFlow functionality, unlike the 6509s." However, a feature set request to Cisco was pushed through enabling additional statistics gathering. On the 4500 chassis, IP SLA for use with ResponseWatch isn't currently possible, while it is on the 6500s.

"I decided to go with ResponseWatch with the 6500s we have at thePlatform because it's great, from a NetFlow perspective, to see what's going across the wire, although it's hard to see the overall impact of these flows going across my network. With ResponseWatch, I can actually see, in real-time, what is the

*"The functionality you get with NetFlow Tracker for the price point you pay meant the question for me was: 'Why wouldn't I go with NetFlow Tracker?' I looked at other Cisco Technology Developer Program partners, as well, and the features they were offering and it was NetFlow Tracker hands down."*

– Rob Sherrard,  
senior network architect,  
thePlatform



impact on overall performance and throughput, in terms of packet loss, latency and jitter on the wire. Ideally, I would deploy ResponseWatch with predefined thresholds and once those are exceeded I could then use NetFlow Tracker to identify the potential causes.”

He continued: “The network can be a bit of a black box, where you don’t really know what the response times are, either in and out of the network, or for intra-network traffic. ResponseWatch allows us to measure and report on that effectively. So much of what thePlatform does is tied to SLAs, where our customers have certain expectations and ResponseWatch allows us to be proactive instead of reactive, where we can start trending.”

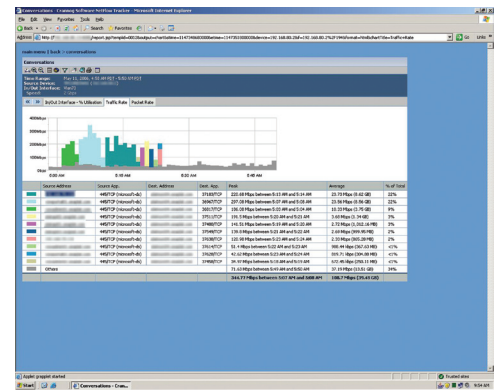
thePlatform is starting to implement some inter-VLAN Access Control Lists – ACLs. Sherrard comments: “I can take a box on one LAN and communicate with a box on another LAN regardless, but we want to be able to lock that down and limit which boxes can communicate. The ACLs are for security purposes, as well, and with NetFlow Tracker, we know what’s going across the wire and can profile it to establish a baseline and ACLs, according to the wire traffic. NetFlow Tracker helps us ensure no critical application is accidentally blocked or denied.” For Sherrard, therefore, NetFlow Tracker is less an occasional forensic application than part of the regular network monitoring toolbox. Plus, he uses it two or three times a week to extract detailed reports.

Of the installation itself and the support he received, Sherrard observes: “The documentation is pretty straightforward and the installation process went well – even when we were setting up NetFlow on Cisco 6500s, which is slightly more complicated.

**The final word**

Sherrard feels quite evangelical about this mission to let other SMEs know there are affordable, but enterprise-quality, solutions available: “I know there are many small to medium sized businesses looking for such solutions, but who are not quite sure how they can utilize and deploy them.

“Having worked for wealthy companies like Microsoft, where there is no shortage of tools and monitoring, I’m lucky to be able to share my large enterprise experience in finding tools of similar quality that fit into a smaller setup, like thePlatform. For me, it totally made sense to go with NetFlow Tracker: the price point was just right and the features and functionality were all there – and then some. If I hadn’t found NetFlow Tracker, I would almost certainly have gone with another hardware vendor.”



An engineer for NetFlow Tracker wrote a script for thePlatform to copy/pull log files from the devices listed (*names and IP addresses blurred out for security reasons*). This particular spike had not been noticed before, and Sherrard says it was interesting and informative to see the traffic flows, once the script started.

**About Fluke Networks**

Fluke Networks is a leading provider of network and application performance management solutions. The company's technologies enable enterprises to reliably and securely manage the delivery of mission-critical applications across their infrastructure. Fluke Networks' products increase application and network availability, optimize the use of bandwidth, and reduce operating costs across traditional and IP-based infrastructures. For more information, visit [www.flukenetworks.com](http://www.flukenetworks.com).

**NETWORK SUPERVISION**

**Fluke Networks**  
P.O. Box 777, Everett, WA USA 98206-0777

**Fluke Networks** operates in more than 50 countries worldwide. To find your local office contact details, go to [www.flukenetworks.com/contact](http://www.flukenetworks.com/contact).

©2007 Fluke Corporation. All rights reserved.  
Printed in U.S.A. 4/2007 3030304 D-EN-N Rev A