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Knight Vision Service Targets WAN Costs

September 30, 2003

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The WAN most enterprises think they have is often not what they're actually using and paying for. And it frequently costs more than what's necessary.

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That is the premise behind a new service that WAN consulting firm **MultiSystems Interconnect Inc.** is preparing to launch next month. MSI's new Knight Vision service is designed to provide in-depth analysis of an enterprise WAN's ability to support business-critical traffic and recover the value in the network.

"Many networks today evolved instead of being designed from the core. As they grow they tend to be inefficient and don't behave very well," said Joe Passafiume, president of the Stow, Mass. firm. "We bring analytical skills to bear and look at the infrastructure, come up with a characterization we can quantify that shows the overall activities on the network and whether it's the best way to do that."

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According to Passafiume, it was not unusual in the course of previous consulting engagements for MSI to find such errors as orphaned circuits that a client was still paying for but not using. Other typical problems involve address ranges inappropriately applied, naming conventions being resolved in the wrong place or chatty, bandwidth-intensive protocols traversing the network for no reason.

In the new Knight Vision service, consultants follow a five step process that begins with a discovery phase in which consultants uncover what's really happening along technical and financial dimensions. This includes gathering an understanding of the enterprise's goals, which are a key ingredient in the modeling of the network that will follow.

In the second design assessment phase, MSI recommends what is needed to support a new deployment or existing applications. These recommendations provide a roadmap for optimization and cost savings.

MSI in the third step takes on the logistical issues involved in making any recommended changes, Passafiume said. Such logistics could include changing bad naming or routing schemes, changing carrier circuits, or redeploying a topology.

The fourth step lays out the best practices MSI believes are involved in day-to-day management of the network, including fault, configuration, accounting, performance and security management.

Finally, in the last phase, MSI takes a snapshot of the altered network's behavior to determine whether the network is drifting away from the intended performance.

"Its important you manage the resources you buy from your carriers. We know what to measure to see if any service level agreements have been violated and how to follow up with credit requests," said Passafiume.

In the first three phases, if MSI can't find a way to optimize a client's network and recover value from it, the service is free. "We think there is a lot of buried treasure in these networks. There is no risk to the client," he added. MSI is paid a percentage of the difference between the existing expenditure for voice and data services and the new costs after changes are implemented. The last two phases of the services are priced on a fixed-fee basis.

According to Passafiume, MSI in its predecessor to Knight Vision found that the service can usually save clients from 30 to 55 percent of their existing WAN expenditure level.

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