

Integrated solution supports SNA connectivity and smooth migration to TCP/IP

The Challenge :

Familian Northwest needed to integrate its Hawaiian branches into the company's network. The branch offices were running SNA-based communications, using green screens. Familian was also running Frame Relay, using FRADs and SDLC, throughout its network. The company wanted a new solution that would minimize hardware start-up costs and support both SNA and IP devices.

The Solution :

The company turned to a systems integrator to help find a cost-effective solution. North American Systems recommended the Perle 594e Network Controller because it provided Familian with support for both SNA and IP devices, plus it eliminated the need for costly FRADs throughout the network.

The Benefits :

Twinax users could deploy terminals and printers as well as supported Frame Relay connections. PCs running TCP/IP or SNA could also be added to the LAN segment. The Perle 594e allows a single point of access to the IP Network for both Twinax and LAN devices. This eliminates the need for expensive and complex SNA-enabled routers.

THE CUSTOMER:

Familian Northwest is the largest plumbing distributor in the American Northwest, serving the residential, industrial, commercial, manufacturing, heating, and waterworks markets. With over 80 branches from Alaska to Hawaii and international operations in the South Pacific, Familian is a subsidiary of UK-based Wolseley plc, the largest plumbing distributor in the world.

The Challenge

After Familian consolidated branches in Hawaii, John Herrington, IT Operations Manager, was responsible for integrating them into the company's network. Familian was already running Frame Relay using FRADs and SDLC throughout its network. Although, Herrington wanted to continue to use Frame Relay for its high-speed and high reliability, he preferred a solution that minimized his hardware start up costs. More importantly, he wanted a solution that would support both SNA and IP devices, so that his Twinax users could deploy Twinax terminals and printers, while IP users at remote sites could have easy and rapid access to corporate intranets, extranets and the Internet.

Familian's Hawaiian branch offices were running SNA-based communications using green screen Twinax terminals for its inventory management, sales, purchasing and receiving. The green screens were linked to their central site via Perle 394 and 494 Remote Controllers and IBM 5394 and 5494 Remote Controllers.

Herrington says, "We planned a phased migration of the branch offices from Twinax terminals running SNA over Twinax to network stations running IP over Twinax. We wanted to give employees at the remote sites the ability to check the Internet for part availability, pricing, specs from our vendors and customers."

The Solution

Herrington turned to a systems integrator he had worked with in the past to help find a cost-effective solution. Dave Bogey, Vice President, North American Systems, recommended the Perle 594e Network

Controller because it would provide Familian with support for both SNA and IP devices. The Perle 594e solution would enable Twinax users to deploy their Twinax terminals and printers, and supported Frame Relay connections, while PCs running TCP/IP or SNA could be added to the LAN segment connected to the Perle 594e Network Controller. The Perle 594e solution allows a single point of access to the IP Network for both Twinax and LAN devices - SNA or IP based - eliminating the need for expensive and complex SNA-enabled routers. Using the Perle 594e's MPTN option, SNA traffic could be routed across the Frame Relay network using a single standard Internet Protocol (IP).

"My customers increasingly rely on IP protocol to carry network traffic across their WAN," said Bogey. "But as Familian's case demonstrated, there is still the need to run SNA data in an IP environment. The Perle 594e solution provides AS/400 customers with the technology they need for smooth migration and integration of new and existing communications structures."

Herrington took Bogey's advice and deployed the Perle 594e, using IP over Frame Relay protocol to connect the remote branches in Hawaii to the central AS/400 server site. Impressed with the response times of the Perle 594e, Herrington calculated that the installation would pay for itself in just 2 years due to the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the Frame Relay network.

The Future

The Hawaiian installation was so successful that Herrington has expanded the project to Familian's other branches.

"Since talking with Dave Bogey last year about the Hawaiian branches, I've outfitted more than 90 Familian Northwest sites with Perle 594e Network Controllers, with another expected 10 sites by the end of the year," said Herrington. "The Perle 594e is a perfect, single box solution for our needs - not only has it allowed us to do what we need to do efficiently - it has saved a tremendous amount of money over the long term."

