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Highlights

Challenge

Medical Mutual ran out of 10GbE ports in their legacy data center, installed in 2005. Additionally, a bottleneck in processing times was discovered at the default gateways. Legacy operating system updates proved too disruptive.

Solutions

- 7048 Series Switches
- 7050 Series Switches
- 7150 Series Switches
- EOS®

Results

Batch processing time was cut in half; ease-of-use of operating system along with Arista features proved to enable the growth of the data center in ways that weren't previously possible.

About Medical Mutual of Ohio



Medical Mutual Health Insurance Company was founded in 1934. It is the oldest and largest health insurance company headquartered in Ohio, with 2,470 employees and serving 1.6 million members. As a private company, it has emphasized the development of products and services that focus on the best interest of its customers and their communities.

With a large customer base and a commitment to excellence in serving them, Medical Mutual's data center needs proved to be one of the cornerstones to their overall success as a business.

The following will explore how Medical Mutual of Ohio was able to leverage Arista technologies to grow its data center and increase speed and efficiency at a lower price point.

Project Background

Using a Blade Enclosure server farm, Medical Mutual of Ohio encountered a problem as it ran out of 10GbE ports in their data center. They had previously installed the Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series into the data center in 2005. Difficulties arose quickly with attempts to upgrade Cisco's operating system. "We lost trust in that process," admitted Len Gedeon, Information Technical Consultant at Medical Mutual, which led to the decision to leave the operating system as is despite the critical need for updates.

Additionally, a bottleneck in processing times was discovered at the default gateways with multiple port channels between the 6500 switches. This significantly hindered the overall speed and reliability of their data center.

Solution

At a crossroads with the growth of their data center and unable to sustain it using the 6500 Series, Medical Mutual began looking at alternatives. Of paramount concern were the price point, speed and flexibility of whichever new switches were to replace the Cisco installation. Ultimately, it was the flexibility of a full Linux core, as well as the scalable MLAG and SFlow capabilities that drew Medical Mutual to Arista's portfolio. They were similarly impressed with the previous deployments Arista had made in other well-respected institutions' data centers.

"There were a lot of big, high exposure names on that list of customers, which gave credence to Arista's reliability," said Gedeon. All of these benefits came at a dramatically lower cost compared with continuing the upkeep of the previous installation.

Medical Mutual elected to install several switches from the Arista portfolio. The initial order was for 16 switches: two 7050-Q switches, four each of the 7050-S and 7050-T switches and six 7048-T switches. The installation was completed over Labor Day Weekend of 2012 without any delays, and it immediately produced extraordinary results.

"We noticed our batch processing of claims between our AIX Servers and IBM Mainframe time went from 500ms to 280ms, the quickest we had ever seen," said Gedeon. After previously experiencing bottlenecks with the Cisco installation, they were able to change their approach by leveraging Arista's technology. "Our inter-switch connections are now Port-channels consisting of two Ethernet ports at either 10 or 40 GbE interfaces each, with our default gateways residing in the 40 GbE 7050-Qs, running OSPF," Gedeon explained. Medical Mutual eventually added two more 7050-T switches as well as two from the 7150 Series, bringing the total to 20 Arista switches within their network.

Conclusion

Since cutting their batch processing time in half, Medical Mutual has continued to be extremely pleased with its Arista switches, which have enabled its data center to grow in ways that never would have been possible with its previous Catalyst 6500 installation. In addition to speed, the flexibility and ease of use of the award-winning EOS® (Extensible Operating System) has been a vast improvement, along with features such as MLAG and SFlow that have improved the overall efficiency of its data center. The code level of the switches have since been upgraded with zero outages to date.

It wasn't just the hardware and software that made the jump to Arista such a great choice for Medical Mutual, either. "I would say that Arista has the best technical support in the business," Gedeon said. "We got nothing but highly knowledgeable people at initial contact, and an excellent and honest sales staff, with no gray area or misunderstandings."

All in all, the transition from Cisco to Arista has proved to be the right decision, in the eyes of Gedeon. "Arista is a very easy and trustworthy company to work with," he said. "It was an excellent decision to turn our network into an Arista data center."

For more information on Medical Mutual of Ohio, please visit www.medmutual.com.

For questions, please email askarista@arista.com or visit www.arista.com.

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