

CASE STUDY

Wells Dairy, Inc.

The Customer:
Wells Dairy Inc.

Application:
NetMRI

The Challenge:
Monitoring and automating network infrastructure

The Solution:

- Network discovery
- Simplify and streamline network Management
- Policy and compliance enforcement



The Customer

Wells Dairy, Inc. was started in 1913 by Fred H. Wells when he purchased a horse, delivery wagon, a few cans and jars, and the good will of the business from Ray Bowers, a dairy farmer in Le Mars, Iowa—all for \$250. Since its inception, Wells Dairy has grown and evolved over the years, including the establishment of its nationally known “Blue Bunny” ice cream in 1935.

Fast forward to 2007. Despite its down on the farm roots, Wells Dairy is now the world’s largest family owned and managed manufacturer of dairy products in one location. Its state-of-the-art production facilities are cited by many experts as one of the most technically advanced in the industry.

The Challenge

Wells Dairy has a sophisticated enterprise network in place to support these facilities technology, and people that are necessary to keep growing and advance the distribution of its products well into the future. However, the company needed a network management solution that could keep up with increasing demands on its network infrastructure. The Wells Dairy IT department was not expanding as rapidly as the rest of the company, and therefore it required a solution that could help to alleviate the workload in order to improve productivity and reduce operational costs.

The IT department had to deal with very time consuming issues including, spending excessive amounts of time and energy tracking down improperly configured devices, locating new





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Network Engineer, Wells Dairy

servers, and tracing IP addresses to switchports. Spending an inordinate amount of time locating issues made it difficult for the IT staff to be proactive.

The Solution

A trusted friend informed Wells Dairy network architect, Jim Kirby, about a proactive network management solution, NetMRI from Netcordia. “We weren’t originally looking for this particular solution, but NetMRI is one of those products that once you see it in action, you wonder how you can live without it,” said Jim. “We saw a good ROI and that was all it took to make the decision to install it on our network.”

NetMRI is a proactive analysis solution that monitors, detects, and reports on network issues before they become problems for IT administrators or end-users. A dynamic complement to traditional network management systems, the NetMRI solution enables Wells Dairy’s IT staff to identify and solve potential network issues with routing, subnets, VoIP, VLANs, and multiple other areas, quickly and simply—before they become problems. It provides built-in expert network best practices rules to comprehensively maintain the health of a network while providing crucial analysis information in a simple, precise, and efficient manner.

Netcordia’s centralized platform plugged right in to Wells Dairy’s existing network and gathered data from every network element—regardless of vendor. Immediately upon installation, NetMRI’s built-in analytics engine began notifying Wells Dairy of potential problems and vulnerabilities. It discovered Duplex mismatches and misconfigured devices, which previously took an excessive amount of time to find. It instantly located newly installed servers, and automated standard network management functions, including the ability to trace and associate IP addresses to switch ports.

“NetMRI plays a vital role in the ongoing maintenance of our growing network,” said John Johnson, network engineer at Wells Dairy. “It acts as an extension of our IT department, which provides an immediate return on investment for our company.”

While other tools concentrate on a particular capability, NetMRI takes configuration, performance, security, compliance, and change into consideration when performing analysis—because Netcordia understands that all of these issues are related. For example, NetMRI proactively notifies the IT staff of changes that might have a negative impact on the security of their network, including tracking down MAC addresses that were flagged by another security program. This allows them to locate the physical device on the network very rapidly and avoid network degradation or security breach.

NetMRI provides Wells Dairy with a complete audit of the network on a daily basis. The automated reports provide great insight to the overall health of the network. The network scorecard gives a quick snap shot of Wells Dairy’s network strengths and the areas that need attention. The scorecard includes a configuration report that allows the IT staff to compare current configurations with previous ones.

Wells Dairy also utilizes NetMRI’s IP Telephony module to analyze and troubleshoot VoIP calls on the network. The IT staff uses its “Path Diagnostics” diagram to visually see every network element between a phone call and the final destination to indicate any disruptions in the transmission, including where Wells Dairy has congestion. Now, if a user calls to say they had an issue with a VoIP call, the staff can trace that path and see exactly where the call had issues. NetMRI gives a hop-by-hop chart that lists each device used and where the potential problem is along that path. This saves the staff valuable troubleshooting time and ensures the highest quality voice services for Wells Dairy customers.

NetMRI’s ability to store all configuration files along with history of changes to the device makes it a great asset to Wells Dairy. As research indicates that 60% of network problems are caused by people misconfiguring network devices and making unnecessary changes, Wells Dairy can take control of this situation. By comparing Wells Dairy’s currently running configurations with its previous configurations, NetMRI also serves as an excellent backup tool.

The Result

Since implementing NetMRI, the Wells Dairy IT staff has improved productivity and significantly reduced operational costs, resulting in more efficient management of this large enterprise network. Now, the IT department is more proactive and responsive in identifying issues on the network—ultimately saving Wells Dairy valuable time and money. NetMRI brings to Wells Dairy three key functions with its integrated

management approach: Audit, Analyze, and Automate. Its Audit functionality provides a complete inventory of multi-vendor networks and detection of out-of-compliance network elements. Its analysis function proactively detects performance, configuration and policy anomalies in real-time, as compared against corporate and built-in industry best practices. NetMRI automates the data collection, analysis and the resolution of verified problems.

NetMRI simplifies the complex challenges of managing the network infrastructure so that Wells Dairy can focus on what's important—selling ice cream across the country and around the world.



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