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WAN acceleration investment pays off for semiconductor maker

TriQuint Semiconductor boasts five-fold improvement in data backups since deploying Silver Peak WAN acceleration gear

By Ann Bednarz, Network World
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As a reporter at Network World and now as author of this newsletter, I've had many opportunities to talk with analysts and vendors about what drives technology adoption. I've also been lucky enough to hear from IT executives about what drives their technology plans. Most recently, Pak Chan, IT manager for TriQuint Semiconductor, shared details about how his company selected and is benefiting from WAN acceleration gear.

TriQuint supplies modules and components to communications companies for markets including wireless handsets, base stations, broadband communications and the military. It has manufacturing facilities in Oregon, Texas and Florida; a production plant in Costa Rica; and design centers in North America and Germany. All of TriQuint's sites are connected via an MPLS WAN.

TriQuint chose to go with gear from Silver Peak Systems, which specializes in providing WAN acceleration technology for big-pipe settings such as DS3 and OC3 data center replication and backup environments.

Here's what Chan had to say about the project:

Bednarz: What are the main issues that drove you to look at WAN acceleration?

Chan: First, employees had to wait an unrealistic amount of time to download critical information, like forecasting spreadsheets. Our ERP servers are hosted in Oregon, and when employees in Munich would start to download a forecasting spreadsheet at the start of a meeting, they often wouldn't receive the entire spreadsheet until the meeting was over.

In addition to trouble with simple file transfers around the world, a deeper issue caused concern for TriQuint. Remotely backing up from different locations throughout the world to the Oregon

data center was not an efficient process. Other issues raised by an inefficient WAN architecture included slow SQL database performance, and the desire to allocate appropriate bandwidth to various applications.

Bednarz: What process did you undertake to select a WAN acceleration vendor?

Chan: Currently, there are many vendors offering WAN acceleration. We reviewed our current requirements as well as upcoming service deployments. We wanted to ensure our selected technology met the present and future requirements.

Bednarz: What types of results are you seeing with WAN acceleration in place?

Chan: TriQuint is able to more easily meet its disaster recovery goals. The company experienced a five- to six-fold improvement in backing up data from sites around the world to the company's Oregon headquarters. Backups that used to take several hours were reduced to minutes, ensuring that business data was protected during allocated windows.

Similar improvements are seen when running SQL transactions across the WAN. For example, downloading data from the corporate inventory database takes just three minutes across the WAN today. This process used to take 35 minutes before installing the Silver Peak appliances.

As for WAN utilization, before Silver Peak's solution was deployed, TriQuint experienced greater than 75% average utilization. That's been slashed to just 30% with Silver Peak, giving the company more headroom for future traffic demands.

Bednarz: How have these performance improvements translated into business benefits?

Chan: Since the Silver Peak deployment, TriQuint has experienced numerous positive results, not the least of which has been a 12-month return on investment, based on improved user productivity and reduced downtime risk as a result of faster backup and recovery of critical data. Employees are more productive, now that they don't have to wait for the right information to be delivered over the WAN.

Bednarz: Do you have any advice for other enterprises looking to deploy WAN acceleration?

Chan: Understand your applications, and know your environment. Look for vendors who provide scalability, reliability and performance.

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