

CASE STUDY

SAS streamlines server management with comprehensive Avocent solution



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SAS, one of the largest software companies in the world, develops and delivers its industry-leading business intelligence and analytics solutions through 400 offices in 50 countries. SAS has an impressive global presence, with more than half of the company's revenue coming from outside the U.S. As an IT engineer for SAS, one of Dan Marx's biggest challenges is keeping up with the demands of a growing, global company. "SAS is committed to delivering standardized IT solutions that can scale and be used across geographies," says Marx.

As an Avocent KVM analog switch customer for more than 10 years, SAS has a history of working closely with Avocent. When SAS was ready to move from analog to digital switches, the requirements were clear. "We wanted a seamless solution that could access all operating systems on all platforms. We wanted one interface and one method instead of navigating through a variety of interfaces and access methods," says Marx.

The company selected Avocent KVM over IP switches and integrated DSView 3 management software along with the MergePoint IP-based service processor manager. "We chose Avocent for its unique ability to address console access and power management through a unified solution," says Marx. SAS has deployed Avocent's digital KVM over IP switches and DSView 3 software, enabling remote

CHALLENGE

- Support company growth through common, global technology solutions
- Enable remote server access through a Web browser
- Improve IT productivity via streamlined processes and systems

SOLUTION

- Avocent selected for its unique ability to address console access and power management through a unified solution, and for its forward-thinking business strategy

RESULTS

- 20 percent increase in system administrator productivity via remote server management
- 35 percent decrease in response time for requests submitted to server administrators
- 99 percent of server console management tasks conducted remotely for more than 3,000 servers
- Increased ability to remotely manage regional sites
- Improved workforce flexibility since builds or staging work can be carried out remotely with fewer resources



PROFILE

Customer
SAS

Location
Cary, North Carolina

Type of Business
Software/Technology

Web site
www.sas.com

Applications
DSR® 2035 KVM over IP switches, DSView® 3 management software, Cyclades® ACS32 advanced console servers, MergePoint® 5200 service processor manager

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Dan Marx
IT Engineer
SAS

console access to the company's 3,000 servers for improved IT productivity, security, and customer service.

IT administrator productivity has increased by 20 percent, and 99 percent of the company's server console management and maintenance tasks are conducted remotely. Remote access has also enabled a 35 percent decrease in response time for console access requests submitted to SAS server administrators.

CHALLENGE

As an IT engineer for SAS, one of Dan Marx's biggest challenges is keeping up with the demands of a growing, global entity. "As a global company, we're committed to delivering standardized IT solutions that can scale and be used across geographies," says Marx. "It's our job to find solutions that provide optimal security, IT productivity, and responsiveness to our constituencies."

As Marx surveyed the server hardware landscape, the problem he found was a lack of standards. "Hardware vendors all have different out-of-band service processors with varying console access methods: Dell uses DRAC, HP has iLO, IBM has RSA, and so forth. Each vendor's interface and access management is unique," he explains. To reduce the complexity of managing servers from a variety of vendors, Marx needed a solution that could access each vendor's out-of-band service processor as well as side-band industry standard, Baseboard Management Controllers (BMC), via Intelligent Platform Management Interface (IPMI).

SOLUTION

As an Avocent KVM analog switch customer for more than 10 years, SAS has a history of working closely with Avocent. When SAS was ready to move from analog to digital switches, the requirements were clear. "We wanted a seamless solution that could access any

kind of server. We wanted one interface and one method instead of dealing with a variety of console access and power management methods," says Marx. SAS looked at several vendors and quickly came up with a short list:

"Avocent was the only vendor to address console access and power management as a whole. Avocent provided a complete, unified solution for remote server management," says Marx. SAS was also impressed with Avocent's vision and business strategy. "Avocent was clearly making an effort to provide a total solution, pulling together IPMI, power management, KVM over IP, and management software. They are in lock step with our IT challenges and vision for the future."

RESULTS

SAS deployed Avocent's digital KVM over IP switches and DSView 3 software, which enables IT to work on the company's 3,000 plus servers remotely, improving IT productivity, data security, and customer service.

"Ninety-nine percent of our server console management and maintenance is now done remotely through one interface: Avocent DSView 3 software," says Marx. "It allows IT people like me to multi-task and be more productive. We've increased IT administrator productivity by 20 percent. Instead of standing in front of a console waiting for tasks to be completed, I can now do those tasks from my desktop while answering emails and taking phone calls, increasing efficiency and productivity."

SAS has seen a 35 percent decrease in response time for requests submitted to server administrators. "With KVM over IP, we can begin a staging project from the console desktop application, start the build, and then log in from home later that night to keep the process going," explains Marx. "Before, we'd have to

stay late at work to get the job done. It has significantly changed the way we do our jobs and our staff is pleased with the flexibility it gives them."

IP-based remote access has also improved the security of company data. "With KVM over IP, we have significantly fewer people physically touching our servers and we can now control who gets virtual access to the servers," says Marx. "With the integrated DSView 3 software we can select the servers that our SAS OnDemand IT team needs to access, for example, creating a custom desktop view for that group and access to the servers that support that department. So everyone gets much quicker and easier access to servers through IP, but we also gain control of what they get to see."

"This has been very well-received by our IT staff. People love it," says Marx. "We don't have to tell people where their servers are anymore, and they don't have to walk to the server rooms to do their work since everything can be done from the desktop. All you need is Internet access."

Looking to the future, SAS plans to bring more server sites into the Avocent remote-management framework. SAS will also continue to roll out Avocent's MergePoint service processor manager to optimize the performance of the company's servers across the globe.

About Avocent

Avocent delivers IT operations and infrastructure management solutions for enterprises worldwide, helping customers to reduce costs and simplify complex IT environments via integrated, centralized in-band and out-of-band hardware and software. Through LANDesk®, Avocent also is a leading provider of systems, security, and process management solutions. Find more information at www.avocent.com.