

Command — an IT Perspective

By Ru Wadasinghe
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As the CIO for March Networks®, I believe it is critical that our products fit well into an IT environment. To that end, I asked my team to test and deploy March Networks' Command™ solution early in its product development cycle to provide feedback to our development team. I am truly impressed by the results. Command has been developed with the IT professional in mind. It comes with capabilities that ensure it can easily fit into standard IT environments.

One of the first issues I look at when a new application is deployed is the impact on the server and desktop environments. If a new application requires dedicated server hardware, not only will there be cost implications, but also potentially long lead times to acquire and install the systems. Command fits into a virtualized environment, allowing it to be managed much the same way as any other corporate application. It also supports multiple industry standard databases, allowing IT teams to avoid costly training and acquisition of new databases.

Command uses a browser interface on the desktop with support for a number of the most common Internet browsers. This avoids costly installation of thick clients. Large IT environments typically use standard desktop images. Every time a new desktop application needs to be deployed, significant testing is required to ensure there are no application conflicts with the desktop image. By using thin clients, Command avoids this costly and time-consuming process. Additionally, thick client maintenance is avoided with this approach, ensuring that users are always up to date with the application through centralized management.

Finally, limited end user training is needed because of the familiar interface.

The ongoing maintenance of a new application is always a concern for IT departments, ours included. New applications can often result in increased IT costs. Designing a new application to fit into a standard IT environment greatly reduces the operating overhead. One of the most time-consuming tasks is password resets. Typically, 40 per cent of calls to the help desk are related to password resets. If your help desk is outsourced, each call for a password reset may result in a charge to IT. Corporate password change policies compound this issue, requiring users to reset (and consequently forget) their passwords. Command fits into a standard LDAP/Active Directory environment. This allows a common framework for IT to manage security along with other IT applications and simplifies system administration for setting and enforcing security policies, managing passwords, controlling access and configuring group policies. Users do not require another user ID and password outside the active directory domain, thereby reducing the risk of forgetting their password.

Command manages the deployment and centralized management of IP cameras. This frees IT resources or third party maintainers from the dreaded truck roll in a distributed environment. Mass configuration of IP cameras through Command allows for a cookie cutter approach to



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camera deployments. With Command, firmware upgrades are easily performed from a centralized system, ensuring a common version level across the enterprise and reducing the complexities of managing multiple version levels. All of this results in lower operating costs for an IT organization.

One of my biggest concerns with the deployment of any new application is the impact on the network infrastructure. An application that is not “network friendly” can result in significant restructuring of the network infrastructure, along with both cost and delay issues for the project. Unless there is close collaboration between the IT infrastructure and application teams, this is only found out during the implementation stage of a project. Unfortunately, if the network implications are not considered at the outset of the application design, there is very little that can be done to mitigate this during implementation. This is especially true for bandwidth intensive applications like video streaming.

Command comes with many “network friendly” feature sets that allow it to be deployed easily. In a typical deployment of video surveillance, there is a one-to-one ratio for a video stream from camera to the person monitoring it. More than one person monitoring the same camera can create excessive and unnecessary bandwidth use. It will be especially

severe if video is streamed over a wide area network with the costs of network connections. One way to mitigate this is with IP multicast. However, that comes with the additional complexity of deploying new IP routing protocols and possibly changes in network gear if IP multicast is not already present in your network. With the Server-to-Server Gateway functionality in Command, a single video stream is sent over the network from the recorders to a centralized video gateway. This minimizes the number of video streams without the needed complexity of introducing changes to the network infrastructure. Additionally, the frame rate can be configured based on the bandwidth that is available, ensuring that the network is not overrun by video.

With the IT mindset built into Command, I believe that it can significantly reduce the costs, time and risks to deploy it in most IT environments. With key central management capabilities, deploying Command will not have a significant impact on IT operating costs. ✨

