



IT Team at Midwestern 7-Eleven Franchiser Says ‘Oh Thank Heaven’[®] for PRTG

PRTG Network Monitor Cuts Troubleshooting Time in Half, Pays for Itself in Less than Two Weeks for Garb-Ko Inc.

As part of the extensive upgrade program, Garb-Ko installed PRTG Network Monitor by Paessler AG to provide round-the-clock monitoring of all network components and deliver instant alerts anytime network problems arise. With its exceptional ease of deployment, simple network management and unparalleled capacity for keeping tabs on the network, PRTG has helped Garb-Ko reduce troubleshooting time by more than 50 percent, prevent lost revenues and generate a positive return on investment in just the first two weeks.



From Dialup to Advanced Monitoring in Just 24 Months

Charged with planning, budgeting and executing the network upgrade, systems and security administrator Jason Lee set out to not only improve data connectivity and establish remote access from headquarters to each franchise location, but also streamline troubleshooting by actively monitoring each store’s multiple connections with a simple, easy to use solution that didn’t break the bank.

“When we began, all locations were using dial-up connections and we had no remote access to anything,” Lee recalls. “When there was a problem, it not only took us a while to discover it, but our average response time was about 45 minutes-and that’s just to troubleshoot the issue, not actually solve the problem.”

Depending on the time of the outage, at some of Garb-Ko’s busier locations, the store could lose \$200 in sales in as little as 20 minutes of downtime. Multiplied over 100 locations and multiple non-integrated systems, a significant connectivity glitch could result in major losses.

With high-speed data connectivity and remote access established across all locations, Lee began looking for a way to integrate real-time monitoring to help him and his small staff keep tabs on the myriad terminals and systems in place at each store-including those provided by outside vendors, like Western Union and pre-paid phone card vendors. Firewall protection in place, Lee put his background in programming to work to build a monitoring program from scratch that would provide visibility across the network to enhance reliability and speed response time.

Despite his programming prowess, “It quickly became obvious that the task was overwhelming,” Lee says. “Scalability and reporting were major issues. It was just too much to bring together starting from scratch.”

“Simply put, PRTG operates on the KISS philosophy: keep it simple, stupid. It’s so incredibly intuitive to install, I never had to read the manual-that’s how easy it was. We had PRTG up and running on all stores on the initial fire-wall install within a day. That’s pretty amazing.”

Jason Lee,
Systems and Security
Administrator, Garb-Ko Inc.

PRTG: The Perfect Fit

Like many other savvy IT specialists, Lee consulted the obvious source to find a solution to meet his needs: Google. A quick search for “network monitoring software” led him to test several solutions, including Numara (he was already using their helpdesk and SLA logging solutions), SpiceWorks and GFI Network Server Monitor.

When these failed to meet his expectations for scalability, reliability, ease of use and cost, Lee chose PRTG Network Monitor for enterprise-wide deployment. He installed a free trial version in one store, and the very next day purchased a 100-sensor license. Within three days, Garb-Ko had eagerly upgraded to the enterprise license with unlimited sensors—a rapid scalability that was virtually impossible with other solutions. Thanks to PRTG’s unmatched affordability, Lee says the software generated a positive return on investment, essentially paying for itself, in just the first two weeks in operation.

Reduced Downtime, Greater Efficiency Leads to Fast ROI

Since initial installation, the Garb-Ko team has realized impressive gains in troubleshooting efficiency and improved uptime across the network. PRTG’s instant notification system provides automatic alerts when an unusual or out-of-compliance network stat is detected to help IT staff quickly respond to problems as they occur. The system even supports automatic alert routing based on customizable thresholds: certain events are configured to route directly to Level 1 helpdesk support, and after 30 minutes, the trouble ticket automatically escalates to engineering support.

With proactive, ongoing monitoring across all networked assets, PRTG allows the team to review historic usage statistics, traffic patterns and other network operations to spot potential precipitating events leading up to an outage and ferret out possible memory leaks, firmware corruption and other anomalies across the entire landscape—including staff problems and user errors.

PRTG’s web-based interface and iPRTG mobile app provides access to the entire network monitoring environment from anywhere, anytime—a particular advantage for Lee and his team of two who must meet the IT needs of some 100 different locations.

“PRTG definitely reduces the stress level and allows us to do a lot with few people,” he reports. “Not only is it reassuring that the network is being watched, but it also cuts our troubleshooting time by a good 50-60 percent and helps us to be more proactive in finding and solving problems.”

Metrics:

- Reduced helpdesk response time by approx 70% for computers, networking equipment, servers.
- Reduced ticket resolution time for internet, vpn, and firewall problems by approx 45%.
- Gained the famous five 9’s of uptime (about 30% of our locations have gained 99.999% uptime status), and about 50% have gained an uptime of 98% or better in the last 12 months.

Savings:

- Saved about 15% off of our ISP costs due to the bandwidth analyzing, with projected savings of about \$30,000 over the next 12 months.
- We have dropped about 20% in server upgrade costs due to the fact we took advantage of the unusual detection analysis to see where we were over or under utilized, and appropriated migrated from there.

About Garb-Ko Inc.

As a leading franchiser of the home of the Big Gulp, Garb-Ko, Inc. operates around 100 7-Eleven® convenient stores throughout Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. Between gas pump controllers, point of sale cash registers, credit and pre-paid phone card interfaces, ATMs, money order kiosks and state-operated supplemental nutrition program terminals, the company’s rapidly expanding IT network was due for a major upgrade to standardize connectivity and security and ensure more reliable network availability.



<http://www.garbko.com/>

Network Visibility Improves Long-term Planning and Success

Now with more than 400 sensors deployed and managed remotely across its franchise network, Garb-Ko is able to not only ensure the continued flow of data to support revenue growth, but also better plan for IT upgrades when needed. By continuously monitoring its servers, bandwidth, routers and other gear, the company can now see definitive evidence for investing in upgrades or perhaps revising its utilization to make better, more efficient use of its existing resource capacity.

To ensure consistent performance of all network activities, custom sensors also monitor batch file processes. Lee even created 20 sensors to monitor the backup service on the Garb-Ko servers to provide peace-of-mind assurance that backups were being performed consistently and correctly.

“Having PRTG to keep watch over the network has even spoiled the franchisees a bit, Lee says. “Now when something goes wrong, they expect an immediate response, even if it’s a vendor problem completely outside of our control. But, we can even use data from PRTG to help vendors troubleshoot problems with their equipment, which helps get our systems back up and keep them running at peak performance to ensure reliable service to the customer.”

About Paessler AG

Paessler AG leads the industry in providing the most powerful, affordable and easy-to-use network monitoring and testing solutions. The company’s suite of just-right software products deliver peace of mind, confidence and convenience for businesses of all sizes – from Small Office/Home Office (SOHO) to large enterprises, including more than 70% of the Fortune 100 companies. Based in Nuremberg, Germany, Paessler’s global reach includes more than 150,000 active installations of its products. Founded in 1997, Paessler AG remains a privately held company and is recognized as both a member of the Cisco Developer Network and a VMware Technology Alliance Partner.

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