PowerTerm© WebConnect helps Teletouch resellers be In-Touch

The Challenge

- Teletouch needed an affordable, web-based host access solution for its resellers who require real-time access to the company's host system from remote locations.

The Solution

- With PowerTerm WebConnect, Teletouch can host and manage software applications on its Sun Solaris ES350, providing access to its resellers across the Southeastern United States.
- PowerTerm WebConnect enables Teletouch to use the ActiveX component to connect to the company's server behind its firewall.
- PowerTerm WebConnect provides a quick and simple web-based host access solution for resellers to access customer information quickly and easily.

Benefits

- PowerTerm WebConnect enabled Teletouch to decrease the number of modem lines entering their system, helping to cut costs.
- PowerTerm WebConnect's advanced scripting capabilities enable resellers to connect to their In-Touch system with one click.
- PowerTerm WebConnect's scalable architecture has enabled Teletouch to increase the number of concurrent users accessing their system.
- PowerTerm WebConnect's centralized management tool eliminated the need to travel to each reseller outlet to configure the software.

Customer
Teletouch Communications

Host Connectivity Solution
PowerTerm WebConnect

Host Server
Sun Solaris UNIX ES350

Users
200 users company-wide

"PowerTerm WebConnect was one of only a few products on the market today that allowed us to use ActiveX instead of JAVA to connect to a server that is behind our firewall. This allowed us to stay within the Windows environment because we could use Internet Explorer as our browser for remote dealer locations."

Rick Fry, Information Systems Manager
Teletouch Communications

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Background

Teletouch Communications, in Tyler, Texas provides paging services in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas and Tennessee. The company focuses on smaller metropolitan markets where there is less competition and the opportunity for expansion is greater than in larger metropolitan areas. In addition, Teletouch operates the largest wireless accessory store, selling word message pagers, numeric pagers, voice pagers, 2-way radio pagers and long distance phone cards. To service its growing customer base, Teletouch uses a wide network of resellers — wireless communications companies that sell Teletouch products to their customers.

In order to perform such functions as remote activation of customer pagers, credit verification and customer account setup for billing, the resellers must access mission-critical information from "In-Touch", Teletouch's internal pager activation, billing and general accounting system. Quick and reliable access to the In-Touch system is crucial because if the system is tied up, customers cannot leave with an activated pager. Gaining access to "In-Touch" was becoming increasingly difficult due to the fact that their resellers were using a dial-up connection to connect to the In-Touch system.

Using a dial-up connection was becoming prohibitively expensive over the toll-free circuits that were being provided. As the number of reseller outlets increased, so did the traffic on their incoming phone lines. Neither Teletouch nor its resellers could afford to inconvenience customers due to busy signals since any delay in completing a customer transaction could potentially lead to a loss of customers.

System requirements

Teletouch's In-Touch application runs on a Sun ES350 with a Solaris operating system that fulfills the needs of several hundred concurrent users.

Teletouch's WAN uses a very diverse mix of point-to-point leased lines, ISDN, Frame Relay, Cable Modem, XDSL and POTS dial-up (depending on the size of the retail outlet). Teletouch outlets are located in kiosks in malls that use dial-up, and medium sized retail locations that use ISDA, Cable, and DSL to connect to the Internet. For those locations using the Internet to connect to Teletouch's private network, Watchguard Firebox VPN server and Watchguard SOHO/TC appliances are used to encrypt data being transmitted over the Internet.

Choosing a web emulation package

As Information Systems Manager for Teletouch, Rick Fry was responsible for finding the right software solution for his company, as well as for making sure that all Teletouch resellers could adapt easily to the new system. Following extensive test installs and hands-on evaluations of other software products, Fry chose PowerTerm WebConnect because it was one of only a few products available on the market that allowed Teletouch to use ActiveX instead of JAVA to connect to a server behind their firewall. "PowerTerm WebConnect provided the gateway to the host computer," stated Fry.

"WebConnect's management tool is especially helpful for remote users, multiple office locations and the occasional user who might need assistance."

The benefits

"The administration tool included with WebConnect was exactly what I had in mind when I started my search" said Fry. "It was the only software I found that had all the power I needed on the administrative side. Now, for the first time, system administrators and users can work on the same exact session while looking at the same exact screen on PC's located at separate locations. "

Teletouch has been so impressed with PowerTerm WebConnect that the next logical step will be to assess the feasibility of moving all their back office staff to PowerTerm WebConnect. "We currently use stand-alone terminal emulation software with about 200 installations company-wide. WebConnect is appealing because of the ease of deployment and support that a web-based solution offers our small IS group".

Now that PowerTerm WebConnect is part of their system, Teletouch is beginning to decrease the number of modem lines entering their system. This will help cut costs and offer a higher level of service to their resellers. The new web-based system will also eliminate busy signals and wasted time, and will enable resellers to quickly serve their customers.