

BT to offer application performance guarantees

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New service set to link network performance with enterprise applications within an SLA.

BT Group announced plans on Wednesday for a new service to manage the technology and telecoms infrastructure at corporate users, as it seeks to build up revenue from its core telecoms business.

BT's Global Services division said it is gearing up to guarantee the performance of core business applications, attempting to breach a longstanding ICT barricade.

BT has developed its new Applications Assured Infrastructure service for the wider market from proprietary implementations, and aims to offer the Grail of SLA-backed applications.

However, BT has no immediate plans to offer this type of guarantee over third-party infrastructure. There is no obligation to buy all five service modules - a network audit, optimisation, monitoring, management and application assurance - but customers wanting the latter must also agree to a full BT audit beforehand.

"We can do monitoring and management over a third party network," said Sally Davis, president of Global products and customer service, "[But] doing applications assurance over a third-party infrastructure is, we perceive, very tough at the moment."

This may mean customers that want application performance guarantees with a heterogeneous network, or new customers from a different service provider, will have to renegotiate their WAN package with BT.

When asked if BT would pursue performance guarantees over third-party networks, Davis told *TOTAL TELECOM*, "It's more difficult to get access to the information that we need, but we're not ruling it out."

"The real prize for BT is [offering assurance], which is all about guaranteeing desktop-to-desktop or desktop-to-data centre performance," explained Davis. "We also believe this is the goal that CIOs are aiming for," she added.

BT believes that the top 2000 European companies are currently wasting in excess of 3 million working hours a year or E0.25 billion trying to solve poor application performance issues.

BT begins by auditing the enterprise network, in order to assess which applications are in use, where and by whom, and how they perform.

Step two, optimisation, involves BT's professional services team making recommendations for improvement from the audit data. Monitoring seeks to measure how well the infrastructure is doing in supporting application performance, and identifies any recurring problems.

Management interprets the results and implements a course of remedial action. Assurance, which BT claims it alone can provide in the current global market, is a contractual scheme to provide guarantees outlined in an SLA and where BT already supplies and manages the network. BT has relationships with Compuware and Infovista, among others, which provide the performance monitoring software to do this.

"We should be getting this [capability] into the hardware layer, and we discussed this last week with Cisco," said Andy Green, CEO of BT Global Services, hinting BT would like to see support for its initiative from its vendors.

BT intends to launch the first four modules of the service to the manufacturing, financial, government and transport sectors during April, adding the Assurance module later on this year. A rollout to the U.S. and Asia Pacific is expected.

BT was less clear about how it would negotiate SLAs with businesses for

application performance.

"We will not be putting SLAs into a box, neither will they be entirely bespoke," Green told *TOTAL TELECOM*. The new service's profitability for BT rests partly on minimising the cost normally factored into a managed services contract for SLA transgressions, while charging the same purchase price to the enterprise. Green acknowledged that this charging model is likely to change at a later stage.