

The Challenge: Ensure High Availability BlackBerry Service to Critical Government Employees

The City of Atlanta provides approximately 700 BlackBerry smartphones to everyone from the mayor, executive cabinet members and department heads to inspectors. These BlackBerry users are served by a platform that includes a 4-node Microsoft Exchange Email server cluster, one BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES), the Research in Motion (RIM) platform, and multiple wireless carriers.

For the City of Atlanta, BlackBerry is an invaluable communication tool. "These smartphones go to high-level officials and others who are often not at their desk and need to be accessible at all times," said Mark Campbell, Interim CIO. Yet, despite the importance of these smartphones, the City of Atlanta was having challenges with the reliability of its BlackBerry service.

When individual BlackBerry users ran into problems, the systems administrators had no way of knowing about the problem unless a user called Technical Support; nor could Technical Support easily determine what had gone wrong. Said Kelvin Brooks, Exchange Engineer, "If a user was unable to send messages or the calendar wasn't replicating, administrators had to go through a long, tedious troubleshooting checklist until they hit on the actual cause."

At the same time, administrators had limited visibility into the health of the BlackBerry platform as a whole. Said Campbell, "If there was an outage, we couldn't see exactly where the problem originated—whether it came from within our infrastructure or the carrier was having a problem. We would have to go and manually check our servers; if we didn't find the problem on our side, we'd call the carrier."

The Requirements

Eventually, the executives of the City of Atlanta issued a mandate requiring that the BlackBerry smartphones work reliably 100 percent of the time. The IT department needed a solution that would

- proactively monitor both the BlackBerry platform and the individual smartphones
- alert platform and BES administrators when something went wrong
- simplify BlackBerry and system-level troubleshooting



CITY OF
ATLANTA



“BoxTone cuts our platform troubleshooting from hours to minutes.. with most individual problems fixed instantly.”

The Organization

Atlanta, the state capital of Georgia, is the ninth most populous metropolitan area in the United States. In the past two decades, Atlanta has experienced unprecedented growth, with an official city population of 480,000, and a metro population that has grown in the past decade by nearly 40% to 4.1 million people. More than 9,000 people are employed by the City of Atlanta Government to ensure vital government services are delivered efficiently and timely to residents.

Challenge

- Technical Support and Administrators had no way of knowing when users were experiencing problems with their BlackBerry until they called to complain
- Troubleshooting problems with both individual BlackBerry smartphones and the BlackBerry platform was a matter of long checklists and educated guessing

Solution

- BoxTone for BlackBerry alerts IT about problems with individual BlackBerry smartphones, BlackBerry Enterprise Servers and email connections
- BoxTone gives IT a visual map that shows where there's a problem with the system and a knowledgebase to fix them
- Troubleshooting platform problems now requires one technician instead of two
- BoxTone reports provide detailed information about each smartphone and about the platform as a whole

Results

- Proactive alerts allow IT to keep system problems from impacting users
- Time required to troubleshoot problems on the platform has dropped from hours to minutes for the system as a whole, while simple problems with individual BlackBerry can be resolved instantly
- Trending information allows the City of Atlanta to proactively plan its infrastructure and future growth



The Solution

The City of Atlanta seriously considered only one solution, BoxTone for BlackBerry management and monitoring software because, said Campbell, "it came highly recommended by RIM."

BoxTone in Action

BoxTone software measures every email and data flow, reconstructing every hop across the City of Atlanta's entire BlackBerry platform, including the wireless carriers, RIM platform, Microsoft Exchange Servers, BlackBerry Enterprise Server, and BlackBerry smartphones. In real time, BoxTone automatically analyzes and correlates this data across user groups, infrastructure measurements and learned baselines. This truly unique approach from BoxTone enables IT administrators to better understand the collective and individual experiences of their end users.

For the City of Atlanta, the BoxTone software addresses the need for proactive BlackBerry monitoring and alerting, notifying administrators in real-time of any problems with an individual smartphone or with the end-to-end supporting platform. BoxTone's web-based engineering, operations and technical support consoles show the location of the problem on the platform, allowing the IT group to quickly isolate issues; while comprehensive reports and knowledgebase driven diagnostics enable technical support and administrators to quickly troubleshoot issues, and to make the changes needed to prevent more chronic issues from recurring.

BoxTone also provides the City of Atlanta with added visibility to users by group -- say department heads or cabinet members -- to enable that extra-level of service that VIP and other critical end users demand.

Results: Proactive Management, Faster Troubleshooting, and Better Asset Control

Using the BoxTone solution, the City of Atlanta has been able to gain visibility into individual BlackBerry smartphones and the platform as a whole. "Proactive monitoring and alerting lets us know when specific users are having problems, such as emails pending. As a result, we can contact the users before they experience down time," said Campbell, adding, "We can also see instantly if there's a problem with our platform or with the carrier."

BoxTone has reduced the time it takes to troubleshoot problems. Whereas previously it may have taken 20-30 minutes to determine the cause of a problem on an individual BlackBerry smartphone, now this can be done instantly because BoxTone tells technical support and administrators exactly what the problem is, where it is, and how to resolve it.

For platform problems, said Campbell, "BoxTone reduces troubleshooting from hours to minutes. We've also cut the number of resources required to perform troubleshooting in half; previously we needed two people for troubleshooting, one on the platform side and one on the wireless carrier side. Now we only need one person to do the job."

By reviewing trending information provided by BoxTone, the IT group is also better able to proactively plan its infrastructure—for example, determining whether they need additional exchange servers, email servers and so on—to meet increasing demand.

As a result, the department has been able to meet its requirement of providing a highly reliable platform for its critical BlackBerry smartphones for the city's highest level officials.

About BoxTone

BoxTone® software is trusted by more than 140 of the world's leading enterprises and government agencies, including 55 in the Global 2000, to manage, monitor and support their BlackBerry platforms. Built on patented SmartMP™ technology and conforming to industry standard ITIL best practices, BoxTone's comprehensive modular platform and role-specific consoles enable IT and services organizations to collaboratively reduce support costs, accommodate rapid device growth, and guarantee the high quality of service that mobile users demand. Learn more from the expert in mobile user management at www.boxtone.com, call 410-910-3344, or email us at BoxToneSales@boxtone.com