

The Challenge: Proactively Manage Individual BlackBerry Users & the Entire BlackBerry System



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Houghton Mifflin supplies more than 850 BlackBerry smartphones to its sales force, executives, and IT group. The BlackBerry network includes 2 BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES) for Microsoft Exchange and 1 BlackBerry Enterprise Server for IBM Lotus Domino connected to 8 email servers and multiple wireless carriers.

Until recently, Houghton Mifflin's messaging technologies IT team monitored the health of its BlackBerry network by launching echo emails every one half hour; if the team didn't receive the message on their own BlackBerry smartphones they would know to check for problems. However as Chip Brady, manager of Messaging Technologies, Corporate IT at Houghton Mifflin says, "The system was kludged together. It wasn't very effective or proactive."

If this rudimentary monitoring system did uncover a problem, the group had no way to determine precisely what was causing it – whether it was the BlackBerry smartphone, the carrier, the BES or the mail server. "We'd start at Point A, go to Point B and cycle through various different scenarios looking for a log jam," says Brady. "As a result, if users called in we couldn't necessarily tell them the cause of the problem. This didn't give our sales force and executives a great deal of confidence in our ability to manage the network." It also meant that it took a long time to solve problems and made it difficult to prevent them.

The Requirements

The Houghton Mifflin IT organization needed a solution that would :

- allow it to proactively monitor and troubleshoot problems across all communication links of the BlackBerry network, including, most importantly, each individual user's BlackBerry smartphone.
- Support a mix of technologies including Microsoft Exchange, IBM Lotus Notes Domino and NeverFail.

The Solution

Houghton Mifflin selected BoxTone® for BlackBerry management and monitoring software. Says Brady, "At the time we selected BoxTone, other solutions were available that could manage individual mail servers and network operation centers (NOCs). But we wanted a comprehensive solution that could proactively monitor the entire BlackBerry environment from smartphone to carrier to BES to mail server. BoxTone was the only solution that allowed us to monitor what was going on with all those systems from a single GUI."

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The Company

Boston-based Houghton Mifflin Company is one of the world's leading educational publishers, delivering a comprehensive set of educational solutions, including research-based textbook programs, instructional technology, and standards-based assessments. The Company also publishes an extensive line of reference works and award-winning fiction and nonfiction. Dating back to 1832, Houghton Mifflin combines its tradition of excellence with a commitment to innovation.

Challenge

- Proactively monitor and troubleshoot end-to-end BlackBerry service and individual BlackBerry Smartphones

Solution

- BoxTone alerts IT about problems with individual user service levels across BlackBerry smartphones, servers and email connections for both Microsoft Exchange and IBM Lotus Notes Domino
- BoxTone gives IT a visual map that shows where a message stops in the process of mail flow so IT can more easily uncover the root cause of the problem and resolve it
- Best complements high availability solution NeverFail for RIM BlackBerry

Results

- Proactive alerts allow IT to keep system-wide problems from impacting groups of users or all users
- IT can monitor individual systems and proactively contact users about any questionable events
- Through asset management, IT can identify and recover unused and underutilized smartphones to reduce system overhead and save costs


BoxTone
 The Expert in Mobile User Management



Houghton Mifflin also concluded that BoxTone would best complement its investment in Neverfail for RIM BlackBerry, a high availability and disaster recovery solution that provides fast, seamless failover and switchback capabilities, along with automatic resynchronization between a primary and secondary BlackBerry Enterprise Server.

Says Brady, "The combination of BoxTone and NeverFail was a natural. Both solutions are designed to ensure that our high-value BlackBerry users have superior BlackBerry experience wherever they may go. And we are now more confident than ever that we have a rock solid BlackBerry platform built for user and application growth."

BoxTone in Action

BoxTone software measures every email and data flow, reconstructing every hop across the company's entire BlackBerry system. In real time, BoxTone automatically analyzes and correlates this data across user groups, infrastructure measurements and learned baselines. By aggregating individual availability and performance data in this way, IT administrators can better understand the collective and individual experiences of their end users.

With BoxTone, auto-generated, real-time alerts proactively advise the Houghton Mifflin IT group when and where service level thresholds are violated. When incidents occur, they can now much more quickly troubleshoot service issues - whether they occur within the internal BlackBerry system or outside the firewall, such as within the carrier network. Intuitive Web-based consoles, which visually map the end-to-end BlackBerry system, coupled with BoxTone's knowledgebase-driven diagnostics, further drive faster issue isolation and resolution.

Houghton Mifflin is also turning to BoxTone to manage BlackBerry service levels by user group - such as sales professionals or executives by region - and by carrier. By comparing trend data for these different groups and network components, Corporate IT not only can understand whether a disruption or slow-down is regional or nationwide, but can make adjustments to any under-performing regional networks.



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

BoxTone has succeeded in addressing all of Houghton Mifflin's requirements. Says Brady, "If there's a problem, we know ahead of the users and can notify them. In the best case, we can fix problems before anyone is impacted; at worst, users know we're on top of the issue."

The Corporate IT group can now better track BlackBerry issues for individual users. When a problem occurs with an individual smartphone, the BoxTone platform can tell the service desk the specific smartphone and configuration in question -- rather than having to rely on users to provide that information or send in their smartphone. IT can also track activity on the smartphone remotely.

For example, says Brady, "If we see that messages have started to build up on a particular user's smartphone, we can contact the user and find out if they are having issues. If it turns out they have lost their BlackBerry, we can send them a new one and kill the old one so private company data is not circulated inadvertently."

In addition to faster, more proactive troubleshooting, BoxTone has provided Houghton Mifflin with significant asset management capabilities, to great effect. For example, once deployed, BoxTone's auto-discovery capabilities enabled the IT group to quickly discover that a number of smartphones on the BlackBerry server had been terminated. "BoxTone showed the problem so we were able to eliminate that overhead and recover our assets," says Brady.

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

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