GlowPoint employs end-to-end TANDBERG solutions for increased reliability, quality of service and maximum flexibility

Overview

GlowPoint, Inc. (NASDAQ: GLOW) is a world leader in IP video communications services. Based in Hillside, NJ, the company is known for its broadcast-quality video communications service complete with telephone-like reliability, advanced features and ease of use. GlowPoint's customers vary in size from one or two location companies to major high profile accounts such as the American Red Cross, Forbes.com and the NFL. Additionally, GlowPoint has established its unique services within key verticals such as federal and local governments, legal, education and the broadcast space. Reinforcing its footing in the broadcast vertical, GlowPoint was recently used by several major U.S. networks as a flexible and cost effective alternative for its coverage of the NFL and NBA drafts, the Democratic National Convention and the Michael Jackson trial.

With a network spanning four continents and carrying some 20,000 video calls per month worldwide, GlowPoint requires hardware and software that is reliable, can be easily configured, scaleable and flexible enough to work with multiple vendors, systems and architectures. In short, GlowPoint has to perform for its customers - everyday, no excuses.

GlowPoint has taken advantage of a number of TANDBERG solutions to enhance its user experience and to make its network more reliable and easier to manage. Since TANDBERG has proven to be both reliable and tolerant of multi-network compatible, GlowPoint chose to replace some of its legacy equipment with TANDBERG equipment.

In addition, GlowPoint offers a service that "enables" a customer's existing network to connect to the GlowPoint network thereby taking advantage of all of GlowPoint's award-winning features and functionality. However, the service demanded a reliable solution for firewall traversal. GlowPoint was the first service provider to build the TANDBERG Expressway firewall traversal product into its core network. By doing this, GlowPoint was able to ensure seamless traversal of video communications through firewalls without compromising security on the customers' network.

The Challenge

Although its reputation for phone-like reliability and ease of use was already well established, GlowPoint continued to push for the very best in reliability and performance to make the service more appealing to its customers. The company's requirements included:

- **Resolving intermittent gateway-to-ISDN calling issues.**
- **Increasing functionality:** GlowPoint needed a solution that would provide seamless traversal of firewalls for any H.323 device.
- **Making its system even easier to use.**
- **Ensuring integration:** GlowPoint needed a solution that works across multiple vendors.
- **Flexibility:** GlowPoint also needed a solution that enabled universal dialing plans that could be scaled to meet the needs of any organization.

The Solution

Although it had a choice of vendors, GlowPoint partnered with TANDBERG for an end-to-end video solution. The TANDBERG components used by GlowPoint include:

- Five Gateways.
- Video Endpoints as content capture devices for GlowPoint's Webcasting Service.
- A Multipoint Control Unit (MCU).
- The Expressway firewall transversal solution, with Border Controller.
- The TANDBERG Management Suite (TMS).

GlowPoint's first step was to install TANDBERG gateways which provided a seamless integration between packet-based network services (i.e. IP and ISDN) and support H.264. TANDBERG gateways also support multiple vendors and offer a complete set of TANDBERG videoconferencing features. They are easy to use, offering plug-and play technology, can handle per-call bandwidths of 56 kbps to 2 Mbps and offer support for the highest level of standards-based embedded encryption. TANDBERG gateways can simultaneously handle 8 video calls and 8 audio calls.

The next TANDBERG solution deployed by GlowPoint was a MCU, which bridges multiple inputs so that three parties or more can participate in a videoconference. TANDBERG'S Multipoint Control Unit is the first of its kind to be designed specifically for the enterprise. TANDBERG MCUs can connect multiple audio and video sites in ISDN, IP and mixed ISDN/ IP conferences. Easily deployable and scalable, they are configurable and can join up to 16 video and 16 audio sites in one or more conferences. They also support multiple vendors, H.264 with IP and ISDN, and offer continuous presence support for XGA, VGA and SVGA PC presentations.

GlowPoint also chose to use TANDBERG's Expressway firewall transversal solution, which enables video communication over multiple protocols while offering full feature sets and functionality. TANDBERG's firewall traversal technology safely and seamlessly creates a secure path through the firewall barrier with no feature loss. In fact, Expressway makes it easy to deploy IP-video in the home office: Simply plug a MXP end-point into a DSL port or cable modem and it works.

The final piece was the TANDBERG Management Suite (TMS), a full-featured system that makes it easy for administrators to schedule meetings, while managing and maintaining their entire video network. Conceived and executed by the leader in visual communication since 1987, TMS is the de facto standard. It has the largest installed base and the most third party supporters. It is centralized and has proven its ability to reduce costs and save time by delivering real-time information and powerful diagnostics. For GlowPoint, TMS' ability to manage other, non-TANDBERG endpoints was a critical piece.

Benefits/Results

By incorporating these TANDBERG products into GlowPoint's world-wide network:

- The intermittent gateway-to-ISDN issues have been resolved.
- Firewall transversal problems have faded.
- GlowPoint's service is much easier to use.
- Integration across multiple vendors and disparate systems is a non-issue.

The TANDBERG gateway installation was so successful that it has become a primary route for GlowPoint calls. "About 95 percent of our domestic video calls are going through the TANDBERG gateways," said Stuart Morris Director of Research and Development for GlowPoint. "We've been using them for more than a year now, and they have proven to be reliable and trouble-free."

Morris went on to say that the gateways GlowPoint had used from other vendors weren't nearly as reliable as the TANDBERG products. Calls were failing at an unacceptable rate, which is not tolerable in GlowPoint's business.

"We had some stability issues with other gateways that we tried," Morris said. "We had to reboot them every so often - they would all of a sudden stop processing calls or reject calls. We found the TANDBERG gateways to be a lot more stable. I think we had to reboot maybe once in the last year. So they are pretty solid. They are also a lot more scalable. We have doubled the capacity from the same module."

The installation of Expressway surfaced some integration challenges, which TANDBERG engineers worked quickly with GlowPoint to resolve. In fact, Morris was impressed with the speed and quality of the response. Now Expressway is diligently escorting GlowPoint video calls through myriad firewalls.

"One of the things I really like about Expressway is that it offers the ability to do URI dialing," Morris said. "This means you can dial end-points using email addresses. This is very convenient and it's a unique piece that TANDBERG brought to the table."

"The TANDBERG end-points are performing well. What I like about the MXPs is that they have all the latest and greatest encryption and presentation solutions," said Morris.

He has similar praise for the MCU and the TANDBERG Management Suite. "The MCU is rock solid and easily configurable, which is just what we need and TMS makes it simple and easy for us to administer and monitor endpoints and network devices. Everything we ask, TMS does for us."

Future

GlowPoint will be working with TANDBERG to test new products. In addition, the company plans to employ reliable, configurable and flexible TANDBERG gateways for international calls.

"TANDBERG has proven to be a go-to partner for us," said Morris. "We rely on them for solutions that work."