GRAPHICAL NETWORKS

University of **Calgary**

Case Study

Overview
IT headaches solved with real-time & detailed ServiceNow visualization

Previously, the University of Calgary (located in Calgary, Alberta, Canada) used a tool for network visualization that served them well. The tool's vendor phased it out, however, and ceased further updates.

Since first purchasing the now outdated tool, the team had adopted ServiceNow as its single source of truth: going forward, visualization of the network would have to be sourced directly from ServiceNow. Their now-unsupported visualization tool offered no integrations, resulting in time-consuming workarounds.

The team needed a modern and supported tool that would seamlessly integrate with ServiceNow but which would be on par with the previous tool's functionality. They needed something that worked for the university's budget and turn-key enough so there'd be no significant learning curve or large investment of manpower to get the

project up and off the ground.

netTerrain was ultimately selected as it continued the functionality of the previous tool and offered an abundance of easy integrations to data sets and commercial tools, such as its pre-built connector to ServiceNow.

Implementation was accomplished by just one seasoned employee working on the project part-time; netTerrain's ServiceNow connector allowed for filtering options that ensured needed information was brought in for its documentation project -- while filtering out data that wasn't needed.

Today, the important network information that could once only be accessed via ServiceNow is automatically pushed through to netTerrain — and information about these assets is selectively, and automatically, pushed based on the filtering parameters the team sets.
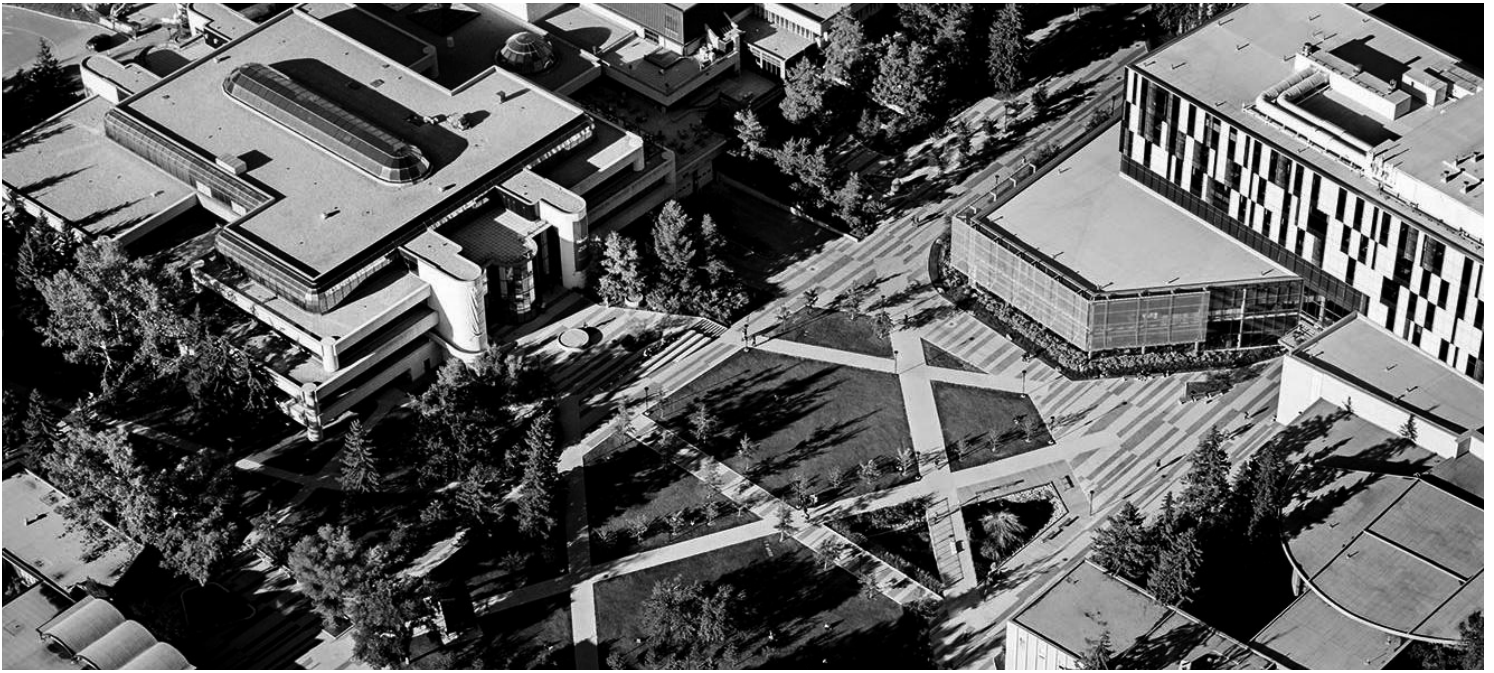
Before netTerrain OSP
Vendor abandons best-in-class visualization & documentation tool

Before netTerrain, the team at University of Calgary had been using a visualization tool that was, when on the market, considered best-in-class for IT visualization. The tool clearly depicted interdependencies and its diagrams were embedded with details that delivered the precise information the team needed: where an outage occurred, what was impacted, vendor-related information, update history, and details about what worked in the past.

The vendor abandoned and ceased software updates and, as a result, previously planned connectors to third-party systems never materialized. Though this was, initially, workable, over time the university transitioned to using ServiceNow as its single source of truth and now the team had a problem: they couldn't connect to ServiceNow.

Without an easy connector between ServiceNow and the now-unsupported tool, the team was left to do time-consuming work: each night they performed a data dump through a data warehouse to a SQL database they had created.

Goal

Comprehensive, detailed network visualization with seamless integrations

The team wanted to visualize their four main data centers plus build out all of the closets and rooms across different campuses — using the real-time network information within ServiceNow.

To accomplish this, the team knew they needed a modern network documentation solution that would retain the same level of functionality they enjoyed with the previous tool: detail-rich, visual, and hierarchical diagrams embedded with the information they needed.

They also needed software that would integrate seamlessly with ServiceNow and give them flexibility to create custom filters that would make it easy to include and exclude assets and data as needed.

Their main visualization goals were:

• Automate visualization of the entire IT infrastructure
• Eliminate unnecessary work and headaches
• Connect easily and seamlessly to ServiceNow
• Easily filter out unnecessary information by creating queries
• Retain the same level of detailed diagrams the previous tool provided

Challenge

Detail-rich software and seamless integrations with a minimal learning curve

The software they chose needed to be user-friendly in order to save both money and time: a steep learning curve wasn't an option as the software would have to be turn-key enough for just one person to implement without a significant time investment.

The new tool needed to integrate seamlessly with ServiceNow. The team was weary of safely transferring years of data and integrating with ServiceNow. They wanted a seamless connection that would give them the power to, on a custom-basis, filter out any irrelevant information.

Any software they selected would have to continue the functionality they enjoyed from the previous tool: detailed, hierarchical logical and physical diagrams embedded with detail from the global view to the port and card views.

Finally, the new software had to work for their budget.

Solution

Real-time visualization software that connects to ServiceNow in minutes

Before selecting netTerrain, the University of Calgary team investigated solutions that promised a seamless integration with ServiceNow.

ServiceNow's homegrown solution Tier4 was explored, however the cost was prohibitive. Other solutions that were explored offered an integration with ServiceNow but either didn't provide the desired level of detail the team needed or required too big of a learning curve to just get the project up and off the ground.

The team found netTerrain was so easy to use, right out-of-the box, that a one-person team would be able to get it up and running while working on it part-time. netTerrain offered automated visualization with a pre-built connector to ServiceNow that made establishing a connection as fast as a couple minutes and as easy as inputting some information and clicking a button. netTerrain's capabilities were not only on par with the previous tool, but far surpassed them. Plus, the price was right.

Implementation

Automatic network visualization accomplished by just one employee

To fully implement netTerrain, the University of Calgary team had to build their four data centers and import an enormous amount of data from their previous tool. To do this, they needed to compress years of data from the old tool and import it — while also using netTerrain's pre-built API connector.

netTerrain makes it easy to import databases and files from any third-party or home-grown system: the team used the built-in data import capabilities to bring in data from the previous tool. In order to ensure a smooth transition to netTerrain, the team took advantage of the deployment environments included, at no charge, with their software license. First, the team first built out their deployment using the staging environment to ensure everything worked properly and then pushed it to the production environment.

The university's implementation of ServiceNow contained millions of data points — the majority of which would not be relevant to bring into netTerrain. To solve this problem, the integration (between netTerrain and U of Calgary's ServiceNow) used the simple copy of ServiceNow built-in query tool which was applied directly to the netTerrain ServiceNow connector.

The process was both straight-forward and easy: the actual connection to ServiceNow data was accomplished by simply entering a user and password and pressing a button. The entire implementation was accomplished by just one seasoned employee who had not previously worked with the netTerrain collectors. No outside consultants were needed.

netTerrain's support team, included with netTerrain for no extra cost, helped to resolve specific questions that came up and assist with any customization issues the team had.

Results

## Detailed visualization of select ServiceNow data with easy-to-use software

Today, netTerrain is used by the University of Calgary's networking, service, and systems design teams.It has successfully replaced the previous tool but continues the old tool's functionality and offers enhanced capabilities and greater ease-of-use. The team finds netTerrain's navigation is extremely easy. They've achieved the level of detailed visualization they need, for example: the network connections can be visualized as well as backplanes.

The once time-consuming nightly data dumps have now been replaced by netTerrain's automatic integration with ServiceNow. Only the assets, and data, that the team wants to document come through via this integration.

In the near future, the team will be expanding its use of the netTerrain platform: they've added a license for netTerrain's outside plant module. This module will allow the team to document, in detail, its outside plant across campuses and accompanying fiber.

"We had to find a tool that would fit within our IT budget, but I wasn't willing to give up any functionality."

Cheryl Nealon - Sr. Production Analyst, Data Centre and Facility Operations
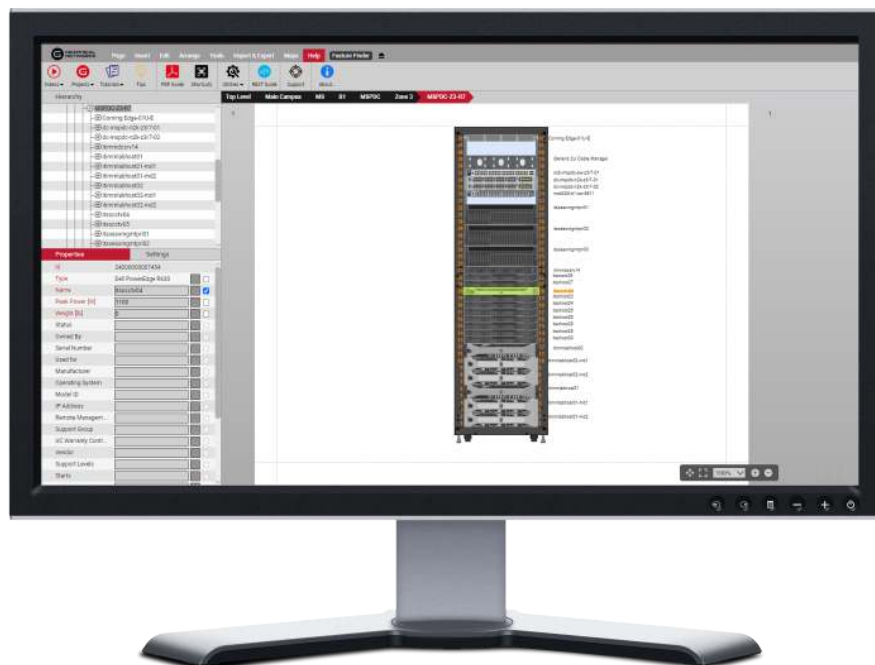
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