

Battling costs while delivering quality service is a tough call. We interview a hero who gave himself more than a fighting chance

# INTERVIEW WITH A SLAer

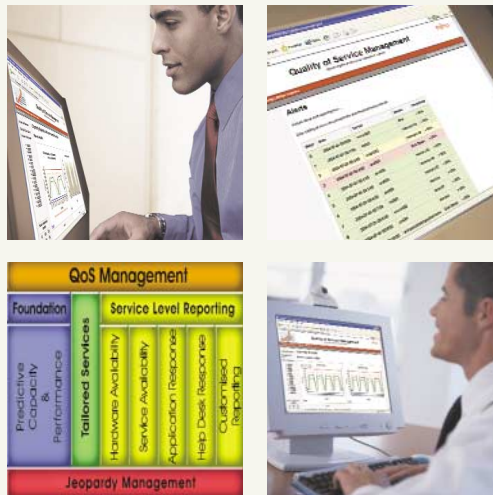
## Mr. Van Helsing, what was the problem you were trying to solve?

We supply ICT services to a range of organisations across Transylvania where the quality of each service is under constant scrutiny. I walk a narrow path between the demons of cost and the voracious appetite of customers for support. I sometimes feel like a character in a Bram Stoker novel, treading the tortuous and exhausting road between success and disaster – without ever seeing the end of my mission. I needed a change of approach that could reduce these pressures and improve my chances of success. Something that would let me reach levels of profitability and satisfaction that ensured a more promising and less threatening future.

## They are fine goals, but didn't your existing support systems help you there?

When you are dealing with people's perceptions, as embodied in service level contracts; monitoring system status and failure is not good enough. My real-life vampires are unexpected cost blowouts, customers frustrated by lower than expected performance, and the timeliness of management information.

Improved returns on investment and lower overall costs require improved profitability, greater predictability, and real-time reporting. In addition, long term growth requires us to delight our customers along the way, not just maintain the curse of minimum expectations. Such poor alternatives only tend to lead to an excess of bloodletting.



## So Mr. Van Helsing, what were your options and selection criteria?

Maintaining the status quo was not an option. I set out to look for something we could add to existing systems to speed-up access to key information. I was looking for a competitive edge that made **Quality of Service (QoS)** management simpler, more flexible and automatic. When the blood's on the floor, 80% of our downtime is problem investigation and only 20% is problem resolution. We needed a **QoS** focus that will at least cut that 80% in half. Longer-term, we also needed better failure prediction so that such problems could be avoided altogether. This implied a number of base features. First, the solution had to slot in to what we already had. Second it had to be simple and inexpensive to implement. Third, it had to be efficient and responsive. Fourth, it

had to adapt to any future predictive requirements.

## What did your search uncover?

There is a lot of activity occurring in this area from a range of suppliers, but cost is a big issue. Too many focus on "building" one-off solutions or try to shoehorn existing monitoring systems in new directions, rather than build expert packaged **QoS** solutions. Our success required costs to be controlled from day-one. Plus as requirement changed, the size of any significant redevelopment costs needed to be minimised. We felt peace of mind would come from a solution where the foundation, monitoring, reporting and data-

base could be implemented as a plug-in appliance. Processes could also be automated and any additional features implemented in a modular cost-controlled way on top of that foundation. Importantly with that approach, change seemed to be better controlled and faster to implement. Plus we would need most of the functions and change tools to come as standard features.

## Which appliance based solution did you like most?

We liked the focused and purpose built approach of the **Fujitsu QoS** management solution. Modular in design, it was fast and inexpensive to implement. Its appliance base delivery system installed a complete toolkit of dedicated QoS management weaponry. Licence keys also let us select and unlock additional levels of intelligence as they were costed and found

to be worthwhile. We also liked its ability to be proactive in ways that let us ensure the best possible protection for service level delivery. The precision and unique capabilities of its weaponry also showed greatest potential for reducing costs, while its ability to inter-work with existing methods of monitoring ensured continuity in our quest for success.

**What most attracted you to this appliance approach?**

As I said initially, we have been fighting off demons on two fronts. SLAers like myself need to build as big a buffer as possible between the war on cost and the fight for service delivery. The bigger the buffer the easier it is to be successful, reduce tensions, and profit from our labours. The appliance approach got us to this position faster. What we could do was more quickly implementing expertise that had already been effective elsewhere for a flying start. These reduced our manpower needs, removed waste and let us achieve longer term goals faster. Safety, reliability and security were also present as all the components and ideas in the new armoury had been pre-tested over the years in similar environments.

**Mr. van Helsing, can you tell me more about these new weapons in your armoury?**

**QoS Foundation** gave me the agents to go out onto the network and collect the raw information needed to analyse the state of play. It also provided the time series repository to store and correlates this information for the production of intelligence reports. Now, I can not only see what is working, but also how well it is working – with the potential to match performance against ongoing commitments.

**Service Level Reporting** gave me the means to fully match resource availability to the commitments of service agreements and good governance and build a portfolio of specific management reports. This portfolio enabled me to better control expenditure, monitor commitments and resource use. Wars are won by having the right resources in the right place; Service level Reporting quickly tells me how I'm doing.

**Tailored Services** let me incorporate new and unique processes into the network. I could purchase Tailored Services to build specific agents and reporting processes. Although similar to building



**Fujitsu's QoS Appliance speeds implementation and reduces cost**

bespoke solutions, it is only required for non-standard items, not everything. Plus it fitted simply into the existing standard reporting functions, again keeping costs to a minimum.

The final weapon, **Jeopardy Management**, allowed automatic correlation of intelligence to help predict what needed to change. Now I can be warned about problems before they happen and deploy my resources and solutions earlier.

**How has QoS Management changed what you do?**

I no longer walk blindly along a narrow path between potential disasters, waiting for something to jump out at me. The measurability and accountability of **QoS** brought benefits on a number of levels. I no longer have to purchase new resources "just in case". I can now plan the most cost effective time for their introduction. Capacity planning functions also better sized the requirements for new applications. Plus with the automation of processes I could do extra things using my existing people. Importantly my grasp of day to day operations is now complete enough to allow me to negotiate better and more practical service level contracts. This gives a significant boost to user satisfaction while enabling better returns on investment.

**How do you now evaluate risk?**

Your question is interesting in that it is only now that I can really evaluate risk. QoS management let me put accounting values onto the performance of all network resources. As a result, Jeopardy Management functions let me see the profit in my IT environment. Even in difficult circumstances "cost versus penalty" projections can minimise overall risk by moving resources to the highest priority areas. This gives enough leeway to allow new resources to be brought on line without service disruption.

**So what's the story on affordability?**

With cost containment a major concern, any large capital outlay was a major risk factor. It was and still is a cutthroat world and pressure is constantly applied to do more with less. Discovering we could rent **Fujitsu's QoS** management system overcame a major barrier to its adoption. Any high initial costs were removed with small regular payments made monthly. I started to see benefits even before I had made that many payments. Now after witnessing the benefits **QoS** Management brings to my domain I see those relatively small monthly payments as a smart investment.

**Mr. Van Helsing, one further question if I may – What has Fujitsu's QoS Management done for you?**

I used to be a lone warrior doing my best to prepare for potential attacks that could not be easily foreseen. Now that I am able to see where danger awaits, the tables have turned. Instead of being on the back foot, I can actively seek and eliminate problems before they develop into larger threats. In my hour of need I can also call for additional resources and deploy them to match the requirements of each engagement. It is now a broader path I tread, and each demon is met on my terms and with the backup and support required. There is profit in my exploits and the future is about all about opportunities not dark threats. ■



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