

Filtering out the noise through full-stack visibility in Cameron County, Texas

A major modernization initiative

Cameron County, Texas (<http://www.co.cameron.tx.us/>) is located in southern Texas near the Mexican border. It has a staff of approximately 1500 covering all the key county services such as environmental health, property tax assessments, justice, incarcerations and the sheriff's department.

Juan Saldana is the chief technology officer and joined the department three years ago. His 14 person IT team covers software development, networking, data center and helpdesk support.

When he first arrived, the team had been without leadership for more than a year and needed a strategy to modernize their environment and take them out of daily firefighting aging infrastructure and improve efficiency. The county had 60 servers but no efforts around virtualization.

So Juan set about creating a five-year plan to take the IT department – and the County-wide technology – into the modern age.

The first phase of the plan included crucial security upgrades to equipment, firewalls and adding a content filter.

His next order of business was to move towards virtualization. To support that effort, Juan and his team evaluated several hyperconverged solutions on the market at the time including SimpliVity, EVO:Rail, Nutanix before finally settling on Cisco HyperFlex.

Finally, the team was ready to deploy a new data center, which included new Cisco UCS infrastructure to support the county's Microsoft Exchange environment and Judicial Management System.

Aggregating alerts using Blue Medora

The data center upgrade also included new software to improve troubleshooting and proactively reduce downtime. Juan had seen success with VMware's vRealize Operations, or vROps, at his past employer. It automates IT operations management, and enables the county to proactively manage performance and gain visibility across physical and virtual infrastructures.

Before deploying vRealize Operations, the IT department didn't have unified visibility into the health and performance of the county's VMware environment and supporting infrastructure. When things went wrong with critical services the team had a difficult time sorting through individual tools, each with dozens of alerts to identify the root cause and get on the road to recovery. All of this created a lot of noise and made it difficult to identify the root cause of performance issues quickly.

So Juan turned to the Blue Medora vRealize Operations management pack for Cisco UCS. This monitoring integration brings all the health and performance information available in native tools like UCS Manager and enhances them with context about other resources in the County's environment. This allows Juan's team to aggregate alerts inside VMware vRealize Operations, which allows them to see issues sooner and identify root causes in seconds.

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The ah-ha moment came as soon as they deployed the Blue Medora management



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Chief Technology Officer
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pack and began receiving alerts in vRealize Operations. The team was immediately notified of an issue that had been impacting performance. UCS had not, to that point, alerted the team to any issues.

Now the team can easily monitor servers and has a clear picture of the health of the environment and performance. Juan and his team plan to continue to increase visibility across environments by adding additional Blue Medora integrations, especially for Microsoft SQL Server, which they are currently unable to monitor.

Juan concludes: "We're now at 80% utilization and have finally decommissioned several very old pieces of equipment. It's been a long three years, but today we can survive a server going down and we no longer pray outside the data center. So after three years we have seen a lot of progress."

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