

## Alfa Mutual Insurance Company

### The Company and Its Network

Alfa Mutual Insurance Company is an insurance company with its central office in Montgomery, Alabama. The network operations center provides network access for approximately 2400 end users. The 850-device network consists of Cisco Catalyst® 6500, 5000, 2900, and 1500 Series switches and Cisco 2600, 3600, 7200, and 7500 Series routers. Alfa Mutual Insurance Company has a gigabit backbone with switched 100-Mbps connection to employee desktops. In addition, each of the company's 409 branch offices connects to the central office with Frame Relay circuits. Alfa Mutual Insurance Company currently manages its network devices using a single server with the CiscoWorks2000 LAN Management Solution (LMS) 2.0 and Routed WAN (RWAN) Management Solution 1.1. The insurance company also uses several management applications from the CA Unicenter suite of products.

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Chad Smith, Senior Network Engineer,  
Alfa Mutual Life Insurance Company

### The Product in Action

Alfa Mutual Insurance Company has implemented CiscoWorks2000 LMS, and relies heavily on the configuration management and software image management capabilities within Resource Manager Essentials (RME). RME is a component of LMS.

Chad Smith is a Senior Network Engineer for Alfa Mutual Insurance Company and, along with four colleagues, manages the network infrastructure. Smith says the RME configuration management capabilities were especially helpful when he and his team discovered a network problem. "We had a routing problem with the remote sites. Using the configuration management applet NetConfig, we corrected the configuration on all 409 routers within 40 minutes by deploying a new configuration to all routers to remove the problem. We have used Resource Manager to correct two major network problems, and I estimate that using CiscoWorks2000 tools saved us 64 hours of work," said Smith.

The Alfa Mutual Insurance Company team frequently uses SoftWare Image Manager (SWIM), another tool within RME. With SWIM, an operator can use several graphical user interfaces (GUIs) to upgrade Cisco IOS® Software or Cisco Catalyst operating system (CatOS) software images. According to Smith, Alfa upgrades the software on Cisco IOS devices twice a year and CatOS images once a year to

incorporate new features and functionality. Currently, they're in the process of rolling out a new version of Cisco IOS software to all of their routers. During this roll-out the automated SWIM upgrades are scheduled to occur late in the night and then the team verifies the images when they arrive in the morning. As Smith states, "We upgrade them at the rate of 10 per night, and this task previously required an operator to be present. Considering we have 409 routers, we are saving a significant amount of time."

Prior to implementing their CiscoWorks2000 products, Alfa Mutual Insurance Company had to use Telnet to manually connect to all network devices to make any software or configuration changes. "We have found that both of these functions are built into Resource Manager Essentials, and we no longer need to develop in-house scripts," says Smith.

The Alfa Mutual Insurance Company network team also finds value in the Campus Manager application within LMS 2.0. Says Smith, "We use User Tracking extensively. We have over 1000 desktops and find that looking at the User Tracking table to associate users to

switch ports is much easier than chasing wire." The User Tracking application in Campus Manager reads the content addressable memory of each discovered Cisco Catalyst switch and associates MAC addresses with switch ports, virtual LANs (VLANs), IP addresses, and so on.

Alfa Mutual Insurance Company also uses the Path Analysis applet in Campus Manager to verify any physical connectivity issues identified by CA Unicenter. Path Analysis uses the discovered topology, spanning-tree state of VLANs, and the User Tracking database to show both Layer 2 and Layer 3 connectivity between two network nodes.

Smith sums up his CiscoWorks2000 experience as follows: "Overall, we are very pleased with the capabilities that we now have as a result of implementing LMS 2.0. Using this product suite has saved us a considerable amount of time and resources."

For more information about Alfa Mutual Insurance Company, visit [www.alfains.com](http://www.alfains.com).



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