5 Best Practices to Assure Your Network Against the Next Big Sporting or Social Event

Enterprise Networking Lessons from the 2012 Olympics

This summer's Olympic Games have been universally dubbed the "Socialympics" for the impact social media and the internet have had on how we view and stay current with the event. More so than any other event in history, the 2012 Olympics have demonstrated the degree to which the social sphere and the enterprise are now irreversibly intertwined. Between July 29th and August 11th more than 3,500 hours of Olympic coverage was streamed over the Internet and a full 302 events were available for online consumption by your users. When you consider that a single user watching one video can consume as much as 30% of a TI or 25% of an E1 connection, the impact en masse is startling. What's even more concerning is that these Olympic Games were live in the Western hemisphere during peak enterprise business hours, so rather than watch from home, your employees were using corporate network resources to enjoy the event. The impact on your network was significant - as much as 60% of the total internet traffic on your network during the event was "wasted" for recreational purposes.

While bandwidth consumption is one aspect of the problem, the bigger issue for your business was the impact this social internet traffic had on your strategic applications. For enterprises, which in 2012 were five times more likely to cite user experience as a network priority than throughput, it is the assurance of user experience during an event like this which is the overwhelming challenge. Unfortunately for many companies, the tools to monitor and manage user experience are not yet in place and certainly not in an integrated, easy to use way.

Assessing Your Network's Olympic Performance

To gauge your business network's performance during the Olympics, the following criteria should be considered:

Ability to <u>Assess</u> User and Application Context:
Enterprises require visibility into six key user experience factors: Directory (Users and Groups), Usage (Time and Location), SLA (Business Priority), Network (Connection Type), Application (Layer 7 Signature), and Traffic (Protocol). The combination of these factors provides an accurate picture of the context by which network policies can be applied. Networks without this level of visibility and policy granularity cannot accurately determine what applications and traffic to control and which applications should have more resources allocated to them.

Ability to Control and <u>Prioritize</u> Traffic:
In today's enterprise where users bring their own devices to work and social applications are used both for strategic and recreational purposes on the corporate network, companies need the ability to contain and control traffic based on contextual attributes and policy. Whereas most IT organizations have some type of compression or acceleration technology in place for strategic applications, without the ability to also control internet traffic and recreational applications, the problem illustrated by the Olympics cannot be adequately addressed.

Ability to Monitor and <u>Assure</u> User Experience:

Assuring network reliability during a major social event like the Olympics requires constant monitoring and management of the actual experiences users have with strategic applications. The IT organization must be able to accurately measure user experience in terms of response time and other metrics to determine the quality of application experience. And most importantly, the network must have the policies and technology in place to dynamically allocate more resources when needed to protect user experience for applications which rely on the network. Without this assurance capability, enterprises cannot guarantee user experience quality for strategic applications during events like the Olympics when the network can fall victim to high volumes of recreational internet traffic.

It's important to take an accurate assessment of how your network fared during the Olympics so that the next big event like the World Series or the US Election does not put you at risk. Here is an easy framework you can use to measure your network readiness to control recreational internet traffic spikes during social events.

STANDING	Ability to Assess	Ability to Control	Ability to Assure
Not on the Podium	Limited or no visibility into types of internet traffic on the network. No ability to distinguish types and sub types of http traffic.	No ability to contain or control application and internet traffic that is recreational or non strategic to the business.	No user experience monitoring or management capabilities for network applications including voice, video and strategic apps.
Bronze Medal	Minimal visibility limited to traffic protocols crossing the network. No ability to distinguish between types of http traffic.	Some ability to block application and other traffic entirely. No ability to throttle the amount of resources consumed by specific applications.	Anecdotal user experience metrics typically from incident calls and user complaints. Disconnected from experience management.
Silver Medal	Visibility into application traffic at layer 7. Limited ability to view within the context of the directory system (user, groups) or SLAs.	Ability to assign maximum bandwidth allocations for specific applications traversing the network.	User experience reporting in real time to measure the quality of experience across users of network applications.
Gold Medal	Integrated visibility and policy engine. Can distinguish between traffic sub types and within the context of users, groups and SLAs.	Ability to dynamically throttle bandwidth based on user, application, time, location, SLA and other policies automatically.	360 degree monitoring, reporting and resolution for application user experience across the network in real time.

If you are like most enterprise networks and didn't get a gold medal for this year's Olympics, the following section provides 5 easy tips to prepare for the next big social event.

5 Tips Prepare for the Next Big Social Event

1. Implement a Network Visibility Engine

The starting point to protect user experience for your strategic applications during a major social event is to implement an engine that delivers visibility into the applications and types of internet traffic traversing the network as well as the users, groups and locations consuming network resources. Without this level of visibility it is not possible to effectively control internet traffic on the network.

2. Identify Your Top 10 Strategic Applications

Create a list of the most important applications to your business for which priority SLAs must be applied. These are the applications that must have protected user experience no matter what. Without a clear picture of your most vital applications, you cannot prioritize resource allocation to them.

3. Identify Your Top 5 Cannibalizing Applications

With the help of a network visibility engine you can identify and assess the traffic sources and applications that are wasting your network resources. For many companies this includes Netflix, Facebook, YouTube and a variety of Peer to Peer applications, but making a list is critical to ensuring they do not jeopardize user experience for your strategic applications.

4. Create a Best Practice Resource Policy

Build simple policies to govern the maximum amount of bandwidth (if any) that can be used by your cannibalizing applications as well as policies to guarantee bandwidth to your strategic applications. Best practice policies should take only seconds or minutes to create and be fully integrated with the visibility engine and application control mechanism.

5. Automate Network Policy Enforcement

Implement a user experience assurance solution that integrates the visibility engine, control mechanism and user experience monitoring to automate and enforce your network resource policies. An integrated approach is the only way to dynamically allocate resources where they are needed and contain resource use when necessary.

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Speak to an Exinda Assurance Expert

Exinda is an innovator in user experience assurance and has over 2,500 customers around the world who are able to effectively control internet and recreational traffic to protect user experience for strategic enterprise applications. Our team of assurance experts is available to help you perform an assessment of your network's readiness to control internet traffic and perform during the next big social event.

Please call or email us to set up a free consultation:
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About Exinda

Exinda is a proven global supplier of next-generation WAN optimization solutions that provide application and user experience assurance. Today, 6 million students rely on the Exinda Learning Network worldwide because more than 700 educational institutions have turned to Exinda Edge to assure application performance, improve the end-user experience, contain recreational applications and reduce network operating costs for the IT executive. For more information, please visit http://www.exinda.com.

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