Maximizing IT Operations with netTerrain: Insights from Bell Mobility

Customer Success Story

Overview

Bell Mobility unlocks significant cost savings & efficiency gains with netTerrain DCIM

Bell Mobility, a division of Bell, Inc., a major wireless carrier in Canada, has been utilizing netTerrain since 2009 to effectively document and visualize its extensive IT infrastructure. By leveraging netTerrain's advanced visualization features, such as dynamic drawings and color-coded racks, Bell Mobility has significantly improved operational efficiency,saved countless hours of valuable time, is able to seamlessly track cabling and fiber changes, and accelerated the onboarding process for new hires.

To gain deeper insights into Bell Mobility's journey with netTerrain, our communications lead, Hannah Ash, had the opportunity to speak with Marc-André Demers, Bell Mobility's Power & Space Manager. During our discussion, Marc-André shared valuable insights into his team's experience using netTerrain and the impact it's had on operations.

Background & Adoption

Q. Hannah Ash (Graphical Networks): How long has your team been using netTerrain?

A. Marc-André Demers (Bell Mobility): I've been part of the Bell team for quite some time, and we started using netTerrain back in 2009. The tool we had been using was about to become outdated as the vendor stopped updating it and ended support.

Q. Hannah: Why did you choose netTerrain as a replacement?

A. Marc-André: We liked netTerrain right away for its advanced visualization features. No more static html pages like in our previous tool. netTerrain has dynamic drawings, floor plans, and color-coded racks, which makes it easy to onboard new team members and document our infrastructure.

Users & Infrastructure

Q. Hannah: How many people on your team use netTerrain?

A. Marc-André: We have around 200 users accessing netTerrain, with most of them utilizing it in a read-only capacity. We have one person who's assigned to keeping the netTerrain database updated - he manages things like server rack layouts and cable connections. Other team members log in to identify available spots and submit requests for new installations or connections.

Q. Hannah: How many devices do you have documented in netTerrain?

A. Marc-André: We have around 20,000 devices distributed across seven major data centers - including routers, switches, servers, and power management equipment. On top of that, we have a million cables documented - everything from Ethernet connections to fiber connections. Since it's a structured cabling approach, there's lots of touch panels in between, so we can cross-connect any piece of equipment to any router in the building, any switches. Lots of cables - and each rack has something like 300 cables coming in.

Efficiency & Savings

Q. Hannah: Would you say that netTerrain helped Bell Mobility save money or improve efficiency?

A. Marc-André: We don't have to do site visits now because we already have what we need in netTerrain, which saves us a great deal of time. Having up-to-date diagrams has helped us optimize our rack space and where we put equipment. With netTerrain, I know what rack belongs to which customer - and I can see if a rack is loaded at, say, 40% or 80%, which really helps us maximize vertical space.

Instead of growing out and adding more racks, we can fully load the ones we have. netTerrain shows us how many fiber ports are available just by looking at the patch panel on top. In the past, we were adding a new rack every time a new service came in - complete with fiber cables and power bars. A new set of power bars is about $2,000 a piece - and fiber. I can easily say that adding a new fiber panel with 24 fiber cables is like $30,000. By using our existing racks, we're saving a lot of money, plus the labor needed to go out to the site.

Q. Hannah: Bell Mobility is one of our oldest customers. Why do you continue to use netTerrain?

A. Marc-André: We really value the visual aspects of netTerrain: it allows us to create accurate representations of our infrastructure. We can visualize the equipment, floor plans, and rack layouts. Having this level of visual clarity makes it easy for new employees to understand the infrastructure at a glance. netTerrain's features, like color-coded racks and interactive layouts, give us a level of visualization that you can't find in other DCIM solutions. Plus, new features are introduced regularly.

Customer Support

Q. Hannah: How have your experiences with our customer support been?

A. Marc-André: Issues have been resolved almost immediately. Sometimes we've needed requires custom development, but even then, we don't have to wait too long. The support from Graphical Networks is actually one of the major reasons why we renew netTerrain year after year.

Q. Hannah: Have you ever suggested new features for our netTerrain updates, given that we often add features based on customer requests? If yes, did we include your suggested features?

A. Marc-André: Many of the features in netTerrain have actually come from our requests and suggestions. Because of this, we've been able to ensure we have software that continues to work very well for our changing infrastructure and needs.

Conclusion

Bell Mobility's transition to netTerrain from their previous IT documentation tool gave them a visually immersive and feature-rich platform for managing their vast infrastructure. netTerrain's advanced visualization, excellent support, and user-driven features has enabled the team to streamline operations, enhance efficiency, and cut costs. With netTerrain's strong focus on customer support and collaborative feature development, it's become a critical tool in Bell Mobility's infrastructure management success.

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Learn More

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