

Inside Perspective

Helping you unleash the full power of MEDITECH

JJWild

Electronic newsletter published every 8 weeks

How healthy is your Storage Area Network (SAN)?

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Maintaining and updating your organization's Storage Area Network (SAN) is critical to the efficient operation of the data center. As IT departments become short on resources and long on initiatives, SAN maintenance can fall low on the priority list, and may only be looked at when there is a problem. Unfortunately, taking the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" approach can allow small problems to become major headaches.

Even if everything is going fine, there are several things you should be doing:

- Conduct periodic assessments to identify minor issues and performance problems—before they interrupt the operation of the SAN.
- Be proactive about software and driver updates.
- Be sure to document the SAN environment. Having an overview of your SAN network topology, current driver revisions, and switch configuration can help IT staff maintain the SAN effectively.

SAN Health Check

The first step in conducting a SAN analysis is to take a thorough inventory of hardware and software. Reviewing and documenting the configuration of each SAN component is essential for creating a SAN topology map, which will serve as an excellent reference tool going forward. It's important to update your SAN documentation regularly; keeping track of even small changes can dramatically assist with troubleshooting efforts—especially if there is more than one person maintaining the SAN.

Additional steps to take when reviewing your SAN include running vendor-specific utilities on each component to assess performance and identifying software and firmware versions that might require updating—bearing in mind that software and drivers need to be the latest tested and approved MEDITECH-compliant versions.

In addition to keeping your network healthy, evaluating the current environment and performance of your SAN also provides a foundation to plan for growth, storage needs, and future expansion. For example, it's critical to allocate sufficient capacity for your SAN, in light of HIPAA regulations for preserving the integrity and security of patient data.

In response to a growing customer demand for proactive SAN maintenance, JJWild now offers a SAN Health Check Service. The purpose of the Service, which complements the mission-critical support we already provide through our existing customer support agreements, is to assess your SAN and provide expert advice specific to your MEDITECH environment.

In addition to creating an inventory and gathering performance data, a JJWild SAN Engineer conducts a thorough analysis of the SAN-attached hosts, identifies issues, reviews SAN capacity, makes recommendations to optimize your current configuration, and creates a plan for smart growth. The SAN Health Check Service is performed remotely while the network is up and running using MEDITECH VPN (Virtual Private Network) for our Client/Server customers.

Are your users complaining of slow performance at certain times, like "hung" screens? Because the SAN hardware is resilient, it is often possible to have multiple background issues

compromising performance without experiencing interruptions in service. JJWild can schedule your SAN Health Check to coincide with identified performance issues to effectively target and diagnose the problem.

A refreshing idea: SAN Host Refresh Service

Regular maintenance is a major factor in ensuring high availability of your SAN. Periodic refreshing of the SAN can prevent many common support, warranty, and performance issues. By flagging potential failure points proactively, you can avoid unplanned downtime. In addition to avoiding interruption of service, decreased throughput can be identified and corrected, increasing the speed and performance of the network. And updating the SAN can eliminate the possibility of voiding hardware warranties when SAN configurations are no longer supported.

JJWild offers a SAN Host Refresh Service, an optional follow-up to the SAN Health Check that provides the software and firmware updates and configuration corrections identified by the SAN assessment. JJWild follows the metrics and best practice configuration models of each supported hardware vendor. Because these best practices change frequently, it is important to keep your SAN current to get optimal support for your hardware. The Host Refresh Service is provided remotely by JJWild Engineers specializing in MEDITECH implementations and support, and is coordinated with the hardware vendor when required. The service helps you to achieve compliance by installing the latest JJWild-tested and MEDITECH-approved software and driver versions.

Prevention is the best medicine.

JJWild provides the assistance you need to review, maintain, and update your SAN to keep it running efficiently. We have the expertise to help you optimize your current configuration, conform to best practices, and create an effective plan for growth. To maintain good health, it's important to have regular checkups.

To find out more about JJWild's SAN Health Check and Host Refresh Services, contact us at editor@jjwild.com.

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