

Enhancing Officer Safety while Reducing IT Support: Oregon State Police Uses Locality™ to Reduce Connectivity Issues

Oregon State Police (OSP) wanted a faster, more precise way to troubleshoot cellular network and technology issues to increase field officer and staff productivity. The organization selected NetMotion Wireless' Locality™, the first-ever cellular network performance management software, to gain visibility into the cellular networks its field officers and mobile employees connect to every day. OSP uses Locality's performance data to find the best cellular coverage for its employees, troubleshoot help desk tickets and reduce cellular costs.

Restricted Cellular Network Visibility

OSP provides critical public safety services to citizens and public safety partners across the state of Oregon. Officers and other field employees regularly work from their vehicles and move from location to location throughout the day. Needing to access central information systems and databases from the road, officers rely heavily on public cellular networks to make the connection. But given the wide geographic area OSP officers are covering, they would often experience connectivity issues on those networks that were hard to track down. With a commitment to "Be There" whenever the citizens of Oregon need assistance, OSP's technical staff wanted to easily troubleshoot and eliminate any preventable connection issues its employees faced working remotely.

"We wanted to reduce our support load in two ways: avoid known issues and/or quickly find the root of new problems, so a fix can be prescribed immediately," said Albert Gauthier, CIO, Oregon State Police.

Ensuring that employees, regardless of their physical location or route, are connected to mission-critical systems was going to require a level of visibility OSP had never had before. "It's tough to pinpoint problems over cellular networks," added Gauthier. "Carriers don't have this information and we had no other way around it."

“ Locality [gives] us direct empirical bandwidth data, real time connectivity statistics, inventory information and more. ”

– Albert Gauthier, CIO

Finding the Fix: Cellular Network Performance Management

OSP, a long-time user of NetMotion Mobility® Mobile VPN solution, evaluated the company's latest solution: Locality. After an impressive evaluation, OSP proceeded with a statewide deployment.



ORGANIZATION

Oregon State Police

INDUSTRY

Public Safety

CHALLENGES

- Reduce IT support load
- Increase field employee uptime
- Pinpoint causes of cellular network issues

SOLUTION

- Locality, cellular network performance management software

RESULTS

- Reduced IT support demand significantly
- Increased reliability of field employee connections
- Gained granular visibility into cellular networks and field user experience
- Gained the ability to track all deployed devices, assigned users, and firmware

“Before Locality, we did our best to troubleshoot issues by asking officers to describe their symptoms,” said Gauthier. “Without any cold, hard data, though, we struggled to know exactly what change was necessary. Locality bridges this gap by giving us direct empirical bandwidth data, real time connectivity statistics, inventory information and more.”

Using a small agent on mobile devices, Locality collects performance and location information, giving IT staff the ability to see the conditions their mobile field workers are experiencing. Using this data, Locality builds data coverage maps, generates detailed device, network and application reports, tracks aircard and modem usage, and exposes poor network performance.



Locality helped the OSP team get to the bottom of connection and packet loss issues

Identifying the Root of the Problem

The OSP team was eager to get to the bottom of dropped connection and packet issues field officers frequently encountered in eastern Oregon. “Locality confirmed very quickly that we had areas of low bandwidth performance near Bend,” added Gauthier. “Once we were able to document this issue repeatedly – using multiple officers traversing the region – we wanted to include our carrier in the conversation. Having aggregate data of this nature was particularly powerful.”

“We sent a coverage report to our carrier rep to find out how we might come to a resolution,” added Gauthier. “A subsequent internal evaluation by the carrier confirmed the same issue and they verified they had plans to install three new tower sites across the region.”

Locality allows OSP to quickly find out why an employee’s service may be intermittent. Working with real-world data, teams can determine if the problem sits at the application, network or device level. “Field officers should not worry about a call taking them to an area of poor coverage,” said Gauthier. “Locality is invaluable for helping us defend against these instances. It ultimately enhances officer safety by giving them the information they need as they head into calls. Our IT staff has really noticed the support load reduction as well.”

Coverage for the Future

Being able to verify field performance is a critical factor for OSP as it evaluates applications and devices against changing needs. It is also key to engaging carriers, as well as internal management, to coordinate and meet the team’s increased coverage needs. “Locality is instrumental in helping IT staff articulate the need for hardware or software changes to management.”

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– Albert Gauthier, CIO
Oregon State Police

Using Locality, OSP plans to keep track of data consumption, so applications can be prioritized across the bandwidth that is available. “In Portland, where staff is connected with 4G, we might want to give priority to our field reporting applications and in eastern Oregon we may want to make it so that eTicketing software is the priority,” said Gauthier. “Locality can help us make these kinds of informed decisions.”

Locality’s inventory control plays a big role in troubleshooting too. “When troubleshooting, it’s nice to be able to quickly view a device’s firmware and other details all in once place,” said Gauthier. “This product has been a boon for us, it provided really good value, really quickly. Overall, thanks to Locality we’re just a lot smarter and data-driven in the mobility related decisions we make.”

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