



Florida Public Service Commission

An Upgrade to Support a Growing E-Government Operation

Established by the Florida Legislature in 1887 and located in Tallahassee, the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) was originally created for the purpose of regulating railroad passenger, freight rates and operation in the state of Florida. Over time, the Legislature extended the Commission's responsibility to include the regulation of utilities, from the telegraph and motor carrier transportation of earlier generations to electricity and telephone service of the modern era.

Industry:

Government

Number of Users:

More than 400 desktop users

Challenge:

Support critical applications to the desktop; maintain 100% reliability

Solution:

Providing reliability and wire-speed throughput with the X-Pedition switch router and Matrix E6

Benefits:

- Scalability for future upgrades from data networks to integrated voice, video and data environments
- X-Pedition 8600 switch router delivers wire-speed IP/IPX routing with pinpoint application control
- Matrix E6 provides dedicated 100 Mbps Fast Ethernet switching to each desktop to support PSC's mission-critical applications
- Modularity of both the X-Pedition and Matrix ensure that the network will keep up with growing application and user demands

Today, the Florida Public Service Commission is no longer responsible for the deregulated railroad industry, but continues to regulate the state's utilities including the investor-owned electric and natural gas companies, local and long distance telephone companies and certain water and wastewater companies. The PSC is the regulatory force that tries to maintain a balance between the utilities and Florida's ratepayers. Protecting consumers from exorbitant rates and unreasonable terms of service is a main objective of the Commission. In addition to ensuring public safety and aiding the public in dealing with regulated companies, the PSC establishes and applies regulatory standards for ratepayers throughout the state of Florida.

The Challenge:**Support Critical Applications to the Desktop; Maintain 100% Reliability**

In order to provide consumers with the best possible service and maintain the most efficient day-to-day operations, the Public Service Commission had been relying on a switched 10 Mbps Ethernet infrastructure. However with more high-bandwidth applications being implemented on the network, it became clear to the Commission that an upgrade was necessary.

According to Lee Kissell, systems project administrator for the PSC, the commission had several reasons for the upgrade. First and foremost, the network must continue to support over 400 users who require electronic business applications and tools to perform their daily tasks. "With more advanced, graphically intensive applications being deployed on the network, the existing 10

megabit infrastructure was not adequate," said Kissell.

The most heavily used application is the PSC's case-tracking database called the Case Management System. This database is used by PSC personnel who track progress on consumer and utility cases from beginning to end. The speed and reliability of this system is crucial to both PSC employees and Florida ratepayers because, without it, complaints could not be efficiently handled. The Commission acts like a court, filtering through cases that are brought to its board of commissioners. The amount of information they need to access, organize and disseminate is enormous.

Another database important to the Commission's daily operations is the Consumer Activity Tracking database. Consumers can contact the PSC to report a complaint and the Commission then contacts the utility. This application helps to automate consumer inquiries and makes sure they are dealt with in a timely manner. If the network bogs down and impedes the access to this critical information, customer service is adversely affected.

Along with these applications, the PSC also wanted to ensure that the network would scale to support emerging applications like Voice-over-IP and video streaming. As Kissell points out, “We need to make sure that the new infrastructure will serve our needs well into the future. And that may include converged networked applications such as multicast video.”

The Solution:

Wire-Speed Throughput and End-to-End Reliability with the X-Pedition™ and Matrix™

Because of its previous experience with Cabletron products, PSC immediately turned to Enterasys Networks™ for an upgrade that was compatible with their needs. Florida Public Service Commission had a working relationship with Cabletron Systems since 1995. At that time, Cabletron installed a brand new network from the ground up in the PSC’s new facility. “We already had a working relationship with the company,” Kissell explained. “Since we were very pleased with both the hardware and service that we received, Enterasys was our first choice to upgrade our LAN.”

As a matter of protocol, the Public Service Commission entertained bids from other vendors, but in the end decided on an Enterasys solution. There were several reasons Enterasys came out on top. “The most crucial was their ability to provide the latest technology at a reasonable price. We were also influenced by their ability to provide design, installation and management services,” said Kissell. It didn’t take long before Enterasys demonstrated these abilities in upgrading the Commission’s infrastructure.

Occupying two attached buildings in Tallahassee, the Commission provides networked services to its many end users via eight distributed wiring closets. At the heart of one of the closets is an X-Pedition 8600, Enterasys’ industry-leading Gigabit Ethernet backbone switch router. The X-Pedition provides the PSC with wire-speed IP/IPX routing with pinpoint control to support the wide range of networked applications the PSC depends on—including future multimedia applications. With inherent scalability and security, the X-Pedition will be a powerful mainstay for the PSC moving forward.

Attached off of the X-Pedition switch router, using flexible, user-configurable uplink modules, are eight Matrix E6 multilayer switches—one in each closet. The Matrix E6 is a modular, five-slot switching platform with the ability to quickly transition from traditional shared technologies to high-speed Fast Ethernet—ensuring seamless support of integrated voice, video and data environments. The Matrix E6s deliver dedicated 100 Mbps Ethernet switching right to the desktop, providing the fast, reliable access PSC end users require.

With the new network in place, the Case Management System is more equipped to handle the vast amount of user requests, especially those from Commission analysts. The additional bandwidth has allowed the PSC to implement an ambitious imaging project. With full implementation the new imaging system allows staff and Internet users to retrieve electronic copies of filings within hours of their submission from the Case Management System and the Internet. “Currently utilities bring in truck loads of paper documents that have to be copied and distributed,” Kissell said. “Now the documents are scanned in once and analysts are able to sort through the information that they need, in a quicker and more organized way.”

To maintain its daily operations with minimal disruption, the Commission needed to upgrade quickly and efficiently. Kissell worked closely with Enterasys Field Engineer Mike Powell to implement the upgrade. Powell was familiar with the Commission because he had helped to install the previous network several years ago. As a result, the entire switch over occurred in just one night and since then the Commission has been running at full speed. “I was amazed at how fast we were able to move all of our end users and applications over to the new infrastructure,” said Kissell. “Because we can provide faster access to regulated utility information, we can better service consumers and boost our core business activities.”

The Future:

Prepared for the Goals Ahead

With the success of the upgrade, PSC feels it is prepared for whatever requirements they may have in the future. According to Kissell, PSC is beginning to identify some future needs that they may want to explore, such as setting up virtual LANs and Voice-over-IP. “It’s reassuring to know that all of these possibilities are available to us,” said Kissell. “We don’t have to go out and buy anything else. We are future ready.”

Contact Us

For more information, call Enterasys Networks toll free at [1-877-801-7082](tel:1-877-801-7082), or +1-978-684-1000 and visit us on the Web at enterasys.com