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Pomeroy Streamlines Process with Netformx End-to-End Design Tool

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IT Solutions

Industry

Pomeroy IT Solutions (NASDAQ: PMRY), based in Hebron, Kentucky, is a solution provider offering enterprise consulting, enterprise infrastructure solutions and lifecycle services. Pomeroy customers range from small to medium businesses all the way to Fortune 500 companies.

Challenge

Designing and validating networks was a tedious multiple-step, multiple-tool process for Pomeroy engineers. Using a generic drawing tool for the design; manufacturer web sites for product information, configuration and validation; and Excel spreadsheets for generating the bill of materials (BOM), Pomeroy sales engineers had to jump back and forth between applications. The process was long, error prone and complex. Pomeroy needed a streamlined design process, and a single tool to handle all the steps.

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Solution

DesignXpert from Netformx provides a complete network planning environment enabling the Pomeroy sales engineers to design and validate networks quickly for manufacturer orderability, and generate BOMs using one application and knowledge base. Netformx cuts network design time in half, giving Pomeroy a competitive edge.

> *"The Netformx tool makes interacting with customer so much easier when they are only available for a short time...is robust and diverse enough to handle all phases of a network design project, start to finish."*
>
> Joe Plunk
> CCIE
> Pomeroy

Overview

Serving customers ranging from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies, Pomeroy IT Solutions works on networking contracts worth millions of dollars and involving thousands of components. To better serve these customers, Pomeroy needed a tool to streamline a slow multiple-step design process. Only one product could handle all the steps from design concept through validation to final customer-facing documentation — DesignXpert from Netformx.

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Generic Drawing Tools Delay Design Process

Before Netformx, Pomeroy's sales engineers would undergo a lengthy process that included designing networks with a generic drawing tool. "It took a long time to get quotes ready for the customer," said Joe Plunk, CCIE, Pomeroy. "I was using a generic drawing tool — a general purpose tool that is not designed to build networks — it was too complicated to build connections."

In addition, the generic tool did not provide product information, validate the designs or generate a BOM, both of which had to be completed externally and manually. So the Pomeroy sales engineers had to validate all the configurations at vendor websites, and then transfer the details into Excel and merge all the files to create a BOM. Since validation had to be performed with several disparate manufacturer tools, Pomeroy engineers had to learn each tool separately.

If the design did not validate against the manufacturer orderability rule set, they would have to go back into the drawing tool, update the design, and validate again on the various vendor tools. This process could be very time consuming, especially on larger networks. Pomeroy needed a single network design tool that could take care of all the necessary steps.

Pomeroy Gets Hooked On DesignXpert

"I convinced my company it was worthwhile to buy DesignXpert and I have been hooked on it ever since," Plunk asserted. "I use Netformx on every project that contains more than a few components."

Now the majority of Pomeroy sales engineers have DesignXpert from Netformx on their laptops. DesignXpert has streamlined Pomeroy's network design process down to a very simple process carried out while sitting at a table interacting directly with the customer. And with an Internet connection, they have the ability to update their laptops on a regular basis with the most up-to-date selection of networking products available.

Now Pomeroy's design process starts with a basic understanding of the customer's network, facilitated by Netformx's Enterprise Autodiscovery capability. Then the Pomeroy sales engineer places devices in a diagram of the customer's network via DesignXpert's drag-and-drop modeling feature.

"We interact with the customer on specifics in real time, validate the design and work through all of the issues — expedited by the cut-and-paste repeatability of DesignXpert," Plunk said. "In the end, with a very simple process I can generate a completely valid 100% accurate BOM already in Excel format to hand off to the customer and sales rep."

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Netformx Delivers End-to-End Design Tool

"I like DesignXpert because it enables me to take the design from the conceptual stage all the way to the final implementation as-built documentation," Plunk stated. "The Netformx tool is powerful enough that in the design phases it provides all the capabilities I need for drawing the design, generating the BOM and making change orders. During the implementation phase, DesignXpert turns into a documentation tool that is very powerful and very accurate, presenting the network design in a format the customers can relate to, HTML. The final document produced by DesignXpert is a dynamic as-built drawing of the network that includes hyperlinks to various important aspects such as configurations."

"The performance of the tool is exceptional," he continued. "And if there is a problem, I pick up the phone and call Netformx tech support and they are right on the spot. They get it fixed quickly and I go on about my business. There has never been an issue that Netformx could not address for me. Netformx tech support is above and beyond."

DesignXpert provides the following advantages for Pomeroy:

- **50% Time Savings:** DesignXpert is an enormous time saver for me," Plunk confirmed. "The larger the deal, the more time it saves. I tend to work on the larger deals, up to thousands of devices. For me, DesignXpert provides at least a 50% time improvement."

"For example, using DesignXpert, I put together a design for 6,000 switchports in eight hours," he continued. "Validated fully, generated the BOM, and had the bottom line price in the customer's hand because I was sitting at a table across from him. There is no way I could ever have done that with the generic drawing tool, using the vendor websites to validate the design, and bringing the configs back into Excel to create a BOM. It would have taken three or four days without Netformx."

- **Validated Design Accuracy:** "DesignXpert is very elegant at helping to validate networking components," Plunk said. "It is a very intuitive, very natural process to fix validation issues in the network. When I am done validating, the design is already fully updated and redrawn, and the BOM is automatically updated, all in one step. And DesignXpert has a powerful new feature — one button validates every device in the drawing."

- **Clearer Design Focus:** According to Plunk, Netformx allows him to put the network together using his expertise and the best practices he has learned over the years. DesignXpert enables him to use the networking components as building blocks without having to worry if a particular part validates with other devices and software. He can let Netformx handle the small details of making the platform valid, while he focuses on making the network architecture valid.

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- **Responsiveness to Customers:** "Netformx has increased my ability to respond to my customers," Plunk verified. "Using the features of the product that make it unique — drag-and-drop design, validation and BOM generation — DesignXpert gives me the ability to get the job done quickly for my customers. They are very impressed with how fast I can design a network with DesignXpert."

- **Improved Design Drawings:** Plunk explained that he uses DesignXpert to export drawings to jpeg and html formats, and posts them on the Web for easy customer access. Or if it is a small network, he embeds the drawing in the Excel spreadsheet. "The drawing function within DesignXpert was designed specifically to draw networks, nothing else," he noted. "With Netformx, I have the tools to draw whatever I need."

- **Expanded Service Offering:** Pomeroy is considering using DesignXpert to expand its current service offering. Having recently purchased the Netformx DesignXpert Platinum Edition, which includes the Enterprise Autodiscovery tool, Pomeroy can now use DesignXpert to help with network assessment and diagramming.

"On a network that is not documented or completely unknown, we can plug into the network and the Netformx Enterprise Autodiscovery feature will show us what is out there," he said. "You would be surprised how many customers have no idea what is on their network. Enterprise Autodiscovery can create additional sales revenue for Pomeroy because we can tell them exactly what is on the network, and what needs to be upgraded or replaced, even saving them money by replacing out-of-date components to achieve a lower maintenance cost."

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The Bottom Line: Time Savings and Responsiveness Close Million Dollar Deals

"Being able to sit at the table with the customer and design the network using DesignXpert makes Pomeroy more competitive," Plunk concluded. "My personal use of the product has closed millions of dollars in sales, because I was able to effectively communicate with the customer. Netformx has been the enabling technology that has allowed me to move faster and present better information to the customers. Netformx makes us leaner, meaner and faster."

"This tool makes my life so much easier when I am dealing with customers in a short time period," Plunk added. "It makes life easier by reducing proposal turnaround time, as well as reducing the time it takes to generate the BOM, pre-implementation drawings, and post-implementation documentation. It is amazing how much this tool does for me from a networking point of view. It handles starting the network from a design concept at the beginning of a sales process, to an implementation diagram, to the final diagram. DesignXpert is robust and diverse enough to handle all phases of a network design project, start to finish."

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