

A photograph of a modern hospital interior, showing a bright, open-plan space with white walls, large windows, and a curved glass railing on a mezzanine level. The lighting is warm and the atmosphere is clean and professional.

AZ Sint-Jan Brugge-Oostend Hospital

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Peter Van Rietvelde | AZ Sint-Jan Brugge-Oostend Hospital, Belgium
Network and Systems Engineer

Optimize with No-Boundaries Vision

Trailblazing a more cost-effective way to provide high-quality services, AZ Sint-Jan developed a network infrastructure shared with other hospitals and care providers across the Western-Flanders region of Belgium. Their primary goals are to deliver high-performance service and eliminate network downtime. But as a result of the shared network initiative, they faced a few unique challenges.

At the time, limited pipe capacity on heavily-utilized lines to the remote hospitals put the network at risk for performance degradation and intermittent outages. What they needed was a technology solution that offered broad visibility and in-depth analysis for troubleshooting mission-critical services quickly and accurately.

“As a hospital, our return on investment is most significantly reflected by IT enhancements that support 24/7 network uptime,” said Peter Van Rietvelde. “Downtime can jeopardize human life.”

Working closely with specialized IT solutions partner Switchpoint® NV/SA, AZ Sint-Jan selected the Observer Performance Management Platform for its total visibility, one that encompasses everything from high-level views to granular insights.

Observer GigaStor is a key component of the Observer Platform and has been integral to fast and precise troubleshooting, providing the hospital with a high-end network monitoring appliance that captures and stores all network and application traffic. GigaStor gathers information across IT silos, providing high-level business views for management clarity and offering deep insight into all packet transmissions.

“Now we can pinpoint where issues occur on the network and instantly get comprehensive understanding into network activity,” said Van Rietvelde. “This allows our team to reduce mean time to recovery and proactively troubleshoot issues.”

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Prevent Network Downtime

Once the team’s visibility and troubleshooting challenges were successfully met, the hospital searched for a technology product they could dedicate to bandwidth monitoring. The network team needed a sophisticated management solution to ensure bandwidth was effectively allocated during times of high utilization to prevent downtime.

AZ Sint-Jan and Switchpoint NV/SA deployed Observer Infrastructure (OI), another essential platform element, to assess the network’s LAN bandwidth. With OI, the AZ Sint-Jan team can now poll every port for switch usage and errors. If usage is above 80 percent or a port has excessive errors, Van Rietvelde’s and his colleagues instantly receive an email alert that identifies specific device and port problems. These notifications allow issues to be intercepted and resolved before they have a chance to impact end users or interrupt network uptime.

As a result of Observer’s findings, the server was reconfigured to resolve the multicast issue to reduce bandwidth demand. The line-saturation problem vanished, and performance was elevated. Without the Observer platform, the remote campus network would not work properly today.

Ensure Healthcare Security

The Network Instruments platform also proved invaluable when the security team spotted a virus. To help pinpoint the virus location, the team deployed GigaStor to capture every packet traversing the uplink of certain switches.

When tasked with researching the infection, they applied the appropriate signature filter to data that was mined from GigaStor during the time the infection was believed to have first occurred. Using retrospective analysis, Van Rietvelde’s team was able to see both the infected devices and the communications involved. As a result, some specific medical devices were identified as the infection’s root cause – making it possible for the hospital’s IT security team to neutralize the virus before additional network devices were impacted or end users were severely affected.



az sint-jan
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The staff and patients at AZ Sint-Jan rely on the hospital’s network team to keep the network secure and running at peak performance levels for the health of those entrusted to their care. As a pioneer in cutting-edge healthcare, the hospital’s IT solutions impact medical organizations throughout the Flanders region and beyond, providing a successful model for cost-effective, high-quality service delivery.

About AZ Sint-Jan Brugge-Oostend Hospital, Belgian

The Belgian AZ Sint-Jan AV Hospital is one of today’s most innovative European healthcare organizations, serving as a state-of-the-art role model for numerous medical facilities across the region. With more than 3500 employees staffing three large hospitals, AZ Sint-Jan delivers a broad spectrum of care — from basic medical to highly specialized treatments.

Vast and complex, its network stretches across three geographical locations: Campus Sint-Jan, Brugge; Campus Sint-Franciscus Xaverius, Brugge; and the Campus Henri Serruys, Oostende. In addition to the hospital’s massive campus system, the network also includes a connection to a hospital in Knokke and nearly 100 doctors who work from remote locations via the Internet.



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