

Bocada Prism SLA Management: Improve Results, Increase Customer Satisfaction

Effectively managing your environments data protection needs can be an extremely labor intensive process. More often there are several key applications that require individualized protection and recovery plans. When adding in attending to end user daily needs, the administrative load can become overwhelming. Now consider when there is a problem in the data center that affects the health of key business applications as well as end user operations, how do you prioritize your troubleshooting efforts?

When Bocada set out to redefine the “backup reporting” market with our Data Protection Service Management Model and purpose built solution, Bocada Prism, we knew we couldn’t just deliver more reports; we needed to truly deliver a service management solution.

What was needed was a true Data Protection Service Management application, a solution which addresses the complexities of service delivery by providing intuitive analysis on whether or not an organization is meeting its business goals and will truly be able to deliver on SLAs while keeping costs to a minimum. The key to this is to provide impact analysis, intuitive workflow and an intelligent knowledge base in addition to automating reporting on the overall backup and recovery activity. These features are truly what make the difference between a reporting solution and a service management solution.

WHO MANAGES TO SLAs?

When discussing Prism and SLA management with customers, we tend to get the response that “I don’t have any SLA requirements”. This is a very common statement from backup administrators focused on day to day data protection. When you really dive into their environment it is easy to identify unspecified SLA’s. Many users have expectations about how often data is backed up and what recovery times should be, regardless of whether there has been an explicit agreement about those deliverables. Unfortunately, administrators become aware of the expectations only when they are not being met and the phones start ringing off the hook...that is when they realize there are “implied SLAs” they are expected to adhere to.

In order to avoid the administrator/end user disconnect, it is best to manage to SLAs (and better yet publish the criteria and get end user sign off) An SLA can be as simple as making sure that servers and applications that have to be backed up every day are in fact successful, or it may be that only one backup a week need be successful. While no two organizations will ever have the same SLAs, it is very easy to set up SLA compliance criteria in Prism. Utilizing Bocada Prism and its SLA (Service Level Agreement) functionality, Prism can provide an administrator solace in knowing that all critical servers and applications are protected according to any data protection requirement. If for some reason there are failures in the protection scheme that will impact SLA compliance, the administrator can be immediately notified of the failures through SLA Impact reports and be provided with key information needed to troubleshoot and resolve the problem, quickly returning to a successful healthy state.

COMPREHENSIVE SLA MANAGEMENT

Standard reporting solutions automate error reporting, which saves a great deal of administrative time, particularly when multiple data protection applications are being utilized. However, if the ultimate business goal is to meet customer SLAs, the error reports only provide a piece of the big picture. What the user really needs to know is if the error will be impacting the ability to meet an SLA.

Bocada Prism allows users to create and define robust, flexible SLAs against which they

The screenshot shows the 'Add SLA Profile' wizard with the following configuration:

- Name:** (empty field)
- Errors:** (empty field)
- Rules:**
 - Full Backup:**
 - Frequency: Per Attempt
 - Condition: On every backup day when there is a backup attempt:
 - There must be at least one successful backup
 - The last backup attempt must be successful
 - All attempts must be successful
 - Any Backup:**
 - Frequency: Daily
 - Condition: On every backup day:
 - There must be at least one successful backup
 - The last backup attempt must be successful
 - All attempts must be successful
 - Days included: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday
 - Backup Window:**
 - Only jobs that start and end between Midnight and 08:00 are considered for SLA compliance (each backup day begins at Midnight today)
 - On weekends, ignore backup window (all jobs are included)

Navigation buttons: Previous, Next, Finish, Cancel

Figure 1: The Prism SLA wizard allows for flexible date ranges and job types to be chosen to measure SLA compliance

measure success. Users can create multi-part SLAs and specify monthly, weekly, daily and per attempt backup frequency options. Users can also select non-contiguous days of the week for backup successes, and even define which days are included in a backup week for a given SLA. Compliance can be measured by backup success on any attempt, the last attempt or every attempt. This provides a great deal of flexibility for administrators to set up multiple SLAs that align with the business needs of the organization. Prism's automated SLA Impact analysis automatically warns a user if the SLA may be impacted by an error occurring in the environment. This is no simple static analysis as no two users set up SLAs in exactly the same way. As noted above, Prism's SLA configuration wizard allows users to configure not only what they want to monitor (fulls, incremental, certain error conditions), set frequency conditions (must

happen daily, weekly , monthly, within this window etc) and then determine what is considered a compliant result. Bocada Prism then evaluates if an error will impact compliance, the SLA impact analysis provides in depth information as to why the SLA may be in jeopardy out of compliance, helping users prioritize and troubleshoot to quickly resolve issues and ensure business goals are being met. (See Figure 2)

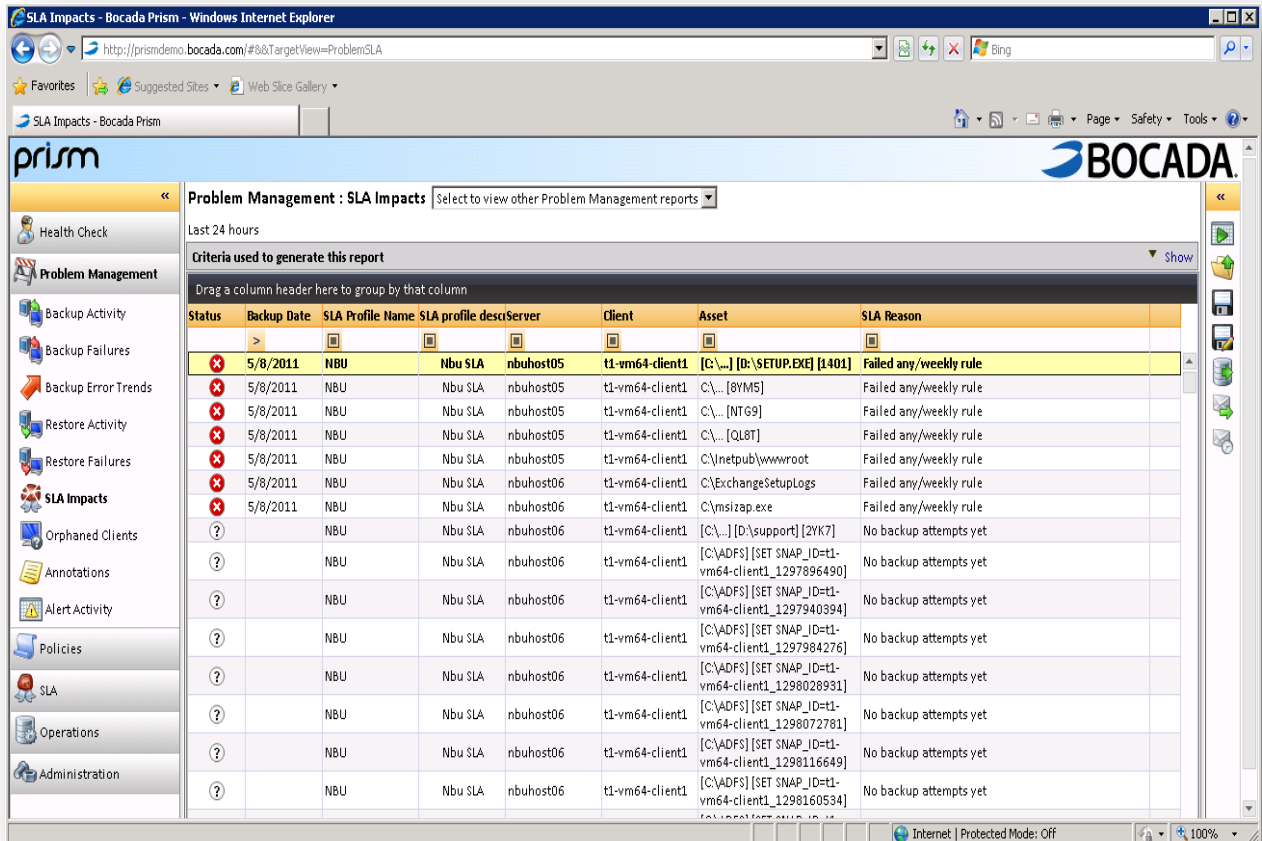


Figure 2: Prism SLA Impact reports indicate the reasons a particular SLA may be in danger of being out of compliance

COMMUNICATING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Independent surveys have shown that one of the biggest challenges backup/data protection professionals have is easily communicating results to customers. Standard reporting from backup applications is generally presented in log files which are very difficult for end users to understand. Often administrators write scripts and dump data into spreadsheets, but this method is not sufficient for communicating the results of SLA compliance to customers as there are far too many variables involved. The result is even if all SLAs are being met at 100%, the end user stakeholder may still question the validity of the results without proof.

Prism addresses the customer communication issue with in depth yet easy to view graphs and analysis of SLA results (see figure 3). Administrators can choose from multiple methods of delivering reports to stakeholders including setting up regular email schedules or setting up role

based access to the Prism interface. The role based access is integrated with active directory, and by setting up zones and user permissions administrators can ensure that only the data meant for that user can be accessed.

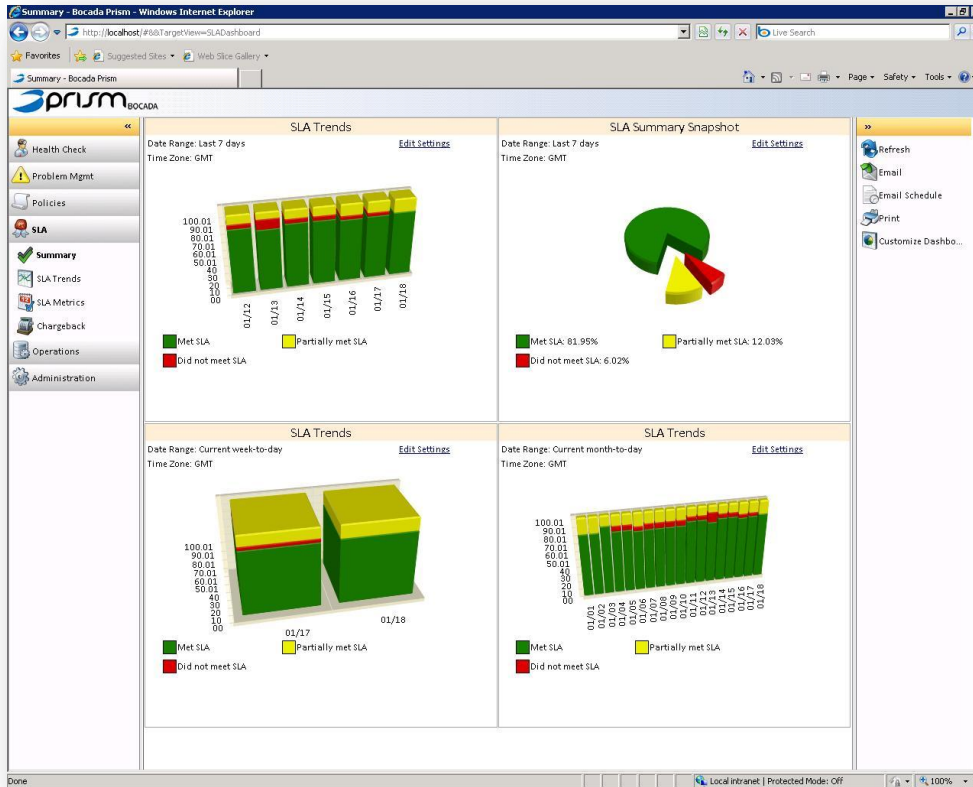


Figure 3: The Prism SLA Dashboard can be configured with multiple SLA trend reports that indicate SLA compliance results over time.

CONCLUSION

Managing to SLAs is a critical piece of the DPSM process. By setting SLAs based on the needs of the business, and subsequently monitoring the results of SLA compliance, IT organizations can better prioritize problem management activities and more effectively align with customer expectations. Organizations that adhere to SLA management goals have increased operational efficiencies, reduced downtime and increased customer satisfaction.

Bocada Prism is the first and only data protection service management solution purpose-built to intuitively drive users through the multi-phased Data Protection Service Management process. Bocada has leveraged years of customer experiences to create a workflow driven, intelligent analysis solution with built in SLA impact analysis, change tracking, trend analysis and a searchable knowledge base to ensure organizations can meet business goals and improve operational efficiencies.