



# Protect Your Standards

InterComms talks to Infosim's NCCM Product Manager about their new ground breaking StableNet® Extension

**Q: We have talked a lot in the past about StableNet® and its use by Operators globally but we haven't touched on the company behind it. Could you summarize the growth and expansion of Infosim?**

**A:** Infosim was founded in Germany in 2003 where it is headquartered and is a privately owned company. We currently have regional offices in Singapore and the United States. Infosim markets and supports the StableNet® solutions through these offices via global channels and Infosim Certified Partner (ICP) companies.

Infosim has worked closely with a number of partners and clients in different countries to target its business and product development around a sustainable growth strategy. As a result, Infosim has had a revenue growth rate of over 30% annually for the past 4 years and has had a positive cash-flow for over 7 years.

**Q: Could you explain the new Network Change and Configuration Management (NCCM) component of StableNet®, its benefit to CTO's and its key differences to what is in the market at the moment?**

**A:** It is rare for an enterprise to buy network hardware from just a single manufacturer and so IT teams have had to learn many different management methods and command languages. Under the pretence of making life easier, each manufacturer produces their own management suite which, by its very nature, only supports their devices. That means capital costs, training and support for a growing number of different management products.

Infosim StableNet® NCCM, on the other hand, is a truly vendor independent solution which brings together a common user interface and the ability to understand devices in-depth regardless of manufacturer. It has been designed from the

very outset to be a "best of breed" product by listening to and working closely with clients to develop a solution that meets the operational and management function needs of network management. Looking simply at data capture, we are able to quickly answer the "Who did What, Where and When" questions.

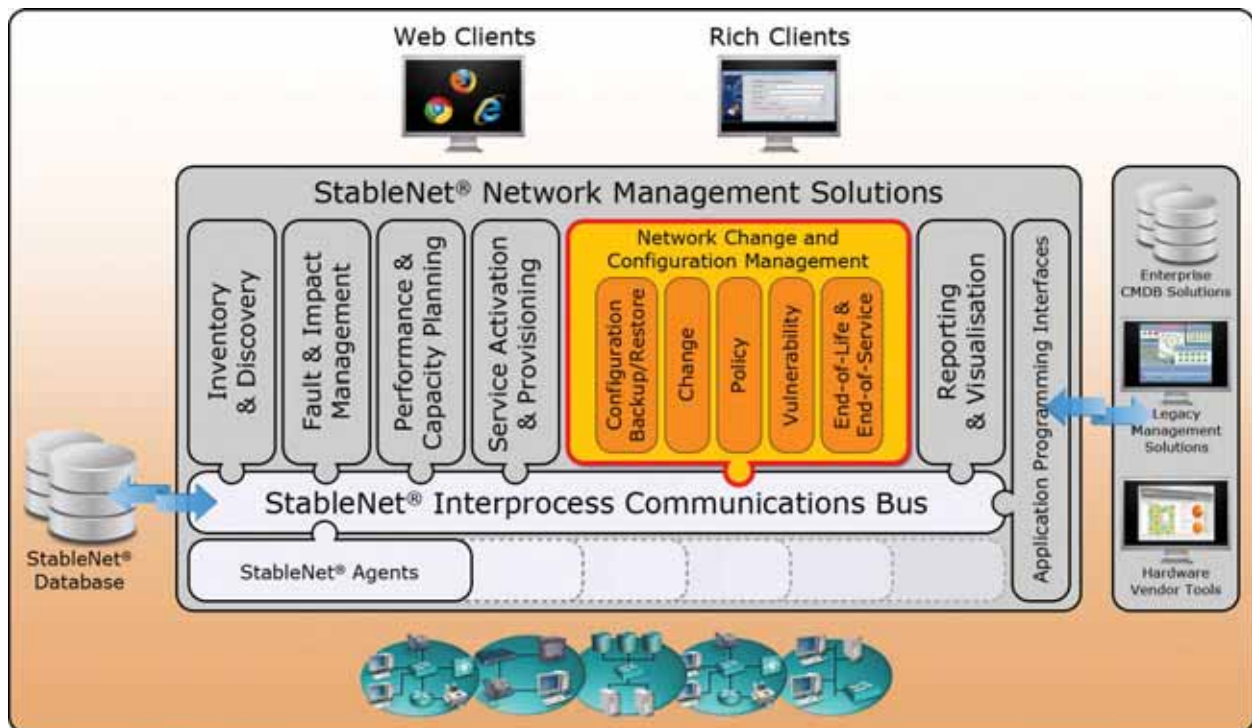
As each change that happens on the network can be automatically captured, Infosim StableNet® NCCM becomes the source of record for all events relating to configuration issues within an estate.

Whereas fault and performance management can be seen to be reactive, change management becomes a pro-active solution. When there is service impact, Infosim StableNet® NCCM can quickly identify if any configurations have changed that may have caused the issue and provide, among other things, a simple to use roll-back functionality to restore the network to a known good state.

Other players in the NCCM space have evolved through a number of iterations as the nascent market grew. Infosim StableNet® NCCM is different, because it was created in a single end-to-end design process and did not evolve organically. Every component of the product has been designed to meet our customer requirements from the very outset.

**Q: Many enterprises have to ensure adherence to various different standards and regulations. How can Infosim StableNet® NCCM help?**

**A:** I think we are all aware that ensuring compliance to corporate standards is a never-ending process and can be a black-hole for man-hours. The key to the initial design of StableNet® NCCM was the ability to automate as many repetitive network management processes as possible, and



### The complete Infosim StableNet® Service Assurance and Fulfilment Solution

- ▶ one of the most critical processes is configuration compliance checking.

Infosim StableNet® NCCM has a rapid real-time compliance checking engine which can ensure that all your devices meet those internal or external configuration standards. Where once it took engineers days, if not weeks, to ensure compliance prior to an audit, Infosim StableNet® NCCM can run the same checks in a matter of minutes. Devices requiring remediation can be quickly identified and then restored to the corporate standard either manually or by using Infosim StableNet® NCCM change management processes.

Most of the industry standard regulations include assurance that device vulnerabilities are mitigated. Infosim StableNet® NCCM has a vulnerability checking engine that enables announcements from device manufacturers to be checked against the complete database of devices. Due to the very nature of vulnerabilities, Infosim StableNet® NCCM will not only check device models and software versions, but it is aware that some devices will only be vulnerable if certain commands are in use. This reduces the time wasted remediating devices that are not vulnerable in those cases.

**Q: Obviously standards and regulations change. How have Infosim future proofed the product?**

**A:** The key ingredient of the StableNet® NCCM compliance checking engine is the ability to capture any information necessary to make those checks. As manufacturers develop new devices with new command structures, NCCM has been

designed to keep pace, with the ability to enhance the device interaction methods.

Once the information is captured, the compliance checking engine is completely flexible and able to search across simple text strings, regular expressions and even complex scripts. The idea is to create a solution that could fulfill every task asked of it under today's requirements while looking as far into the future as possible.

**Q: One of the key words for this product is interconnectivity and its ability to analyze hardware from different manufacturers. This is getting more critical in the marketplace, could you expand on this?**

**A:** In the fault and performance area, they have standardized certain methods to access that information - SNMP, Netflow etc. - but in the configuration and change management space, there is no agreed standard. There are diverse methods - Command line, web interface etc. - using a multitude of different protocols - Telnet, SSH, HTTP, FTP etc. Infosim StableNet® NCCM was designed to be not only manufacturer neutral, but also protocol neutral. If a new device is developed with a new access method, then StableNet® NCCM will be able to access that device (if the device can be remote managed!).

It was believed that at some point the manufacturers would agree on a single management method, language and interface, but this didn't come to pass. They are all very protective of their revenue streams and not forget that training and qualifications are also a steady source of income! As a result, engineers have

▶ to be conversant in many different methods. Using Infosim StableNet® NCCM allows companies to access key information without diverting highly-skilled engineers from other business critical tasks.

**Q: So from what you have said, StableNet® NCCM isn't just another tool for the engineers?**

**A:** No, it is more than that. It meets the requirements of not only the engineering teams but also planning, auditing and management teams who require different information about the network infrastructure.

By looking at how changes impact performance, management can start to look for trends that indicate that employee training may be required, or that unauthorized changes are taking place from inside or outside the company. Infosim StableNet® NCCM is ideally suited for use across all teams within an IT department, whether it be Network Operations, planning, security or senior management.

**Q: It seems like there may be a significant manual process to keep the solution up-to-date. Is this true?**

**A:** Any solution is only as powerful as the information within it. To help reduce the time taken keeping Infosim StableNet® NCCM at the latest level, Infosim offer two annual subscription services. The first is for vulnerability announcements. This supplies the client with a simple update service to ensure their vulnerability checking database is at the latest version. The

second service is for End-of-life/End-of-service announcements to ensure devices are not being used that are no longer under support for bugs, vulnerabilities or hardware faults by the manufacturer.

**Q: It all sounds interesting but in the current economic climate the first question will always be cost savings. How do you help a CFO keep an infrastructure budget under control?**

**A:** Corporate assets such as PCs and printers are quite visible items. Networking hardware tends to be out of sight and, hence, out of mind. Infosim StableNet® NCCM keeps a full record of all network assets including the sub-components under management. As End-of-life notices are issued by device manufacturers, clients can receive automated reports of the devices that will be End-of-life in 36, 24 or 12 months. A simple report enables future financial planning for capital costs.

Similarly, it has been shown that most service contracts contain outdated information - the wrong devices, serial number, locations etc. Infosim StableNet® NCCM can help maintain a record of devices allowing correct maintenance contracts to be put in place. By careful analysis of the hardware involved, it has been proven that maintenance contracts can be reduced by, in some cases, double-digit percentages.

**For more information visit:**  
[www.infosim.net](http://www.infosim.net)

