Estudio de caso: El minorista grande de tienda de comestibles avanza su iniciativa de gerencia de los servicios de negocios con Visual Performance Manager de NETSCOUT

At a Glance

Customer:
A Large Grocery Store Chain

Industry:
Retail (food and drug)

Location:
North America

Challenge:
A large grocery retailer's IT organization had embarked on a Business Services Management initiative to fulfill application and network performance service level agreements with internal customers. Success depended on acquiring coordinated, end-to-end visibility from the end user's perspective of the infrastructure elements necessary to address requests for service.

Solution:
Visual Performance Manager

Result:
Visual enabled a large grocery retailer's IT organization to identify the root cause of problems more quickly and confidently, by promoting the migration away from a network centric analysis, to an approach that focused on transactions from the end-user's perspective. IT personnel worked more cohesively, optimizing anomaly resolution, and IT resource utilization for even better service delivery to end-users.
**Background**

One of the largest food and drug retailers in North America, a Fortune 100 powerhouse with more than 1000 locations across the United States and Canada, has successfully delivered value to its customers for the better part of a century. The company's hundreds of thousands of employees rely on a broad, deep, and complex infrastructure of voice and data networks with multiple, distributed datacenters that allows them to communicate with one another and access the applications necessary for them to execute their daily tasks.

The large grocery retailer's MPLS-based WAN is comprised of a heterogeneous mix of routers, switches, servers, and load balancers, with optical and frame relay circuits providing connectivity amongst the datacenters and out to individual stores. The architecture supports a diverse set of hundreds of applications, including supply chain management, order/inventory management, .com-based systems, and more.

Responsibility for this massive production environment belongs to the firm's IT organization. The sizeable, geographically dispersed department includes teams focused on the networks and their performance, as well as groups that exclusively examine the applications and their performance. Together, the network and applications teams must ensure the best possible end-user experience for all personnel. To help meet that objective, IT launched the Business Services Management initiative, an extensive effort using ITIL as a guide to modify, standardize, and optimize the processes for network and service design, implementation, deployment, and support. IT recognized that thoroughly understanding the past, present, and anticipated performance of the network and applications infrastructure, particularly from an end-user's perspective, was essential to successfully serving its vast community of constituents.

**Obtaining the end-to-end visibility necessary to clearly detect and isolate the source of anomalies – and assign the right personnel to resolve them quickly and conclusively**

Attaining the real end-user's perspective meant acquiring insight into all of the network-based and application-based activities required to fulfill a user's requested action. Unfortunately, no single legacy solution provided the end-to-end breadth and the transactional depth to produce the global viewpoint that truly reflected what the user was experiencing. Such a viewpoint is imperative to drive the confident assessment by IT of infrastructure performance, much less the validation and resolution of anomalous conditions. The IT organization did possess a large array of tools to help them attack network or application problems. However, because these tools were highly specialized, manual correlation of different data sets was required to determine the source of trouble and the best approach to correct it. As a result, multiple IT groups jumped into the root cause analysis fray, which created the need for additional coordination and extended the fault isolation/resolution process.

IT recognized that as the size and complexity of the company's network and applications infrastructure continued to grow, so would the management challenge. That's why they focused the Business Services Management initiative on end-to-end application monitoring – to quantify and ensure the best possible experience for the organization's customers – the endusers.

An IT Director at the large grocery retailer describes the situation.

> We reached the conclusion that for our Business Services Management initiative to reach its full potential, our existing arsenal of tools would not do. A comprehensive performance management solution was integral to achieving all of our objectives.
Finding the right solution

The IT team defined the following requirements and key performance indicators that any potential solution must achieve:

- Capture and analyze real end-user transactions.
- Break down user transaction information into network, application, and transfer time components.
- Baseline application performance to understand how it may change over time.
- Identify and integrate intelligent, deviation-based alerts.
- Provide a method to quantify the real end-user’s perspective of an application or service.

To identify the ideal alternative, the team invited several vendors to participate in a proof-of-concept pilot, where each candidate product could be tested under fire for functionality, usability, and performance. To facilitate the test, IT tapped into the operational network, so each product executed in a live environment for an extended period of time.

The IT Director continues the story.

“We wanted to thoroughly understand the information each solution made available – how much, how transactional, and how integrated, including network and application metrics such as latency and response times. After completion of the test and subsequent analysis, we selected Visual Performance Manager, from NETSCOUT.”

Three key factors led the large grocery retailer to choose Visual Performance Manager. First was the granularity of information presented, along with the ability to drill down to individual transactions. Second was the true breakdown of a transaction into network, application, and download times. Third, and perhaps most importantly, was the strong application performance management functionality, primarily located within the solution’s Application Performance Appliance component.
The Application Performance Appliance can be deployed inline with, or by tapping into, server networks, enabling it to collect all information – down to the individual transaction – about all applications – physical and virtual – executing on the servers. The Application Performance Appliance's proprietary, patented technology stores all incoming data indefinitely, aggregates the information, and forwards it every 30 seconds to the Visual Performance Manager server for display. When users request more detailed information by drilling down Visual Performance Manager's display hierarchy, the Application Performance Appliance delivers it on-demand.

The IT Director portrays the solution’s impact:

“Visual Performance Manager delivered beyond our expectations. In fact, it worked so well so soon that there is strong internal demand for a much wider implementation.”

Delivering immediate and long-lasting benefits that facilitate the Business Services Management initiative

From the proof-of-concept pilot through the initial deployment, Visual Performance Manager from NETSCOUT was embraced by the large grocery retailer's IT personnel. Visual Performance Manager's ease of installation and configuration, along with its robust functionality, provided a substantial impact right away. IT was able to identify, isolate, and resolve anomalies affecting end-users more rapidly and confidently – in part because IT teams could coordinate with one another more effectively – paving the way for even better service delivery.

Thanks to Visual Performance Manager's open architecture, proven performance, and scalability, the company envisions seeing improvements over the long haul as well. IT anticipates becoming more proficient with regard to issue detection and correction for three reasons. First, the solution's robust functionality, displays, and reports are promoting a migration away from a network-centric approach to root cause analysis to an application-based assessment consistent with the end-user's perspective. Second, Visual Performance Manager is helping IT attain a true understanding of the end-user's experience for its business-critical applications. Finally, the solution is allowing IT to begin establishing long-term baselines for performance monitoring purposes.

The IT organization expects to do more than upgrade its responsiveness over time – they are counting on becoming less reactive. The creation of performance baselines that span extended durations will empower IT to more effectively conduct capacity planning activities, as well as validate the impacts of application changes on other applications, the networks that deliver them, and on the users that rely on them. IT believes that Visual Performance Manager will provide a key perspective in their quest to create a comprehensive, proactive monitoring platform, a vital aspect of the company's Business Services Management strategy.

The large grocery retailer's IT Director says it best.

“With Visual Performance Manager in place, our Business Services Management initiative is poised for success in the short-term and the long-term. Improving the productivity of the IT organization and employees throughout our enterprise translates into a better customer experience and greater customer satisfaction and loyalty, positioning us to be one of North America's largest food and drug retailers for the next 100 years.”

For a deeper look into how this solution can help you solve problems, check out the eKnowledge page at enterprise.netscout.com/eknowledge