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Hertz

Using SteelCentral AppInternals, Part of the Riverbed Application Performance Platform, Hertz has Visibility Into Application Performance to Make Sure That Rental Agreements are Processed Quickly to Get Customers on Their Journeys.

The Hertz Corporation operates the Hertz, Dollar, Thrifty and Firefly car rental brands with locations throughout approximately 150 countries. Hertz is the largest worldwide airport general use car rental company.

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In Brief

Challenges

- Migrate a mission-critical mainframe application to a Java-based Web app without causing problems at the rental counters
- Keep the Web app functioning flawlessly and continue to add to its functionality (e.g., support for multiple devices)

Solution

- SteelCentral AppInternals application performance monitoring solution

Benefits

- Production support team receives email alerts before issues affect end users
- Transaction traces point to root cause of issues and identify right people to involve in the resolution
- Dashboards reveal areas for ongoing application improvement

Ensuring maximum application performance—and fast customer service

Hertz uses a proprietary application to generate rental car transactions. The application was initially written in Cobol and ran on a mainframe. Several years ago, the company undertook the process of upgrading it to a Java-based Web application running on IBM WebSphere Linux servers.

It was important that the migration, which was done in stages, did not disrupt the work of the rental service representatives or slow down customers' pick-up or return of their rental car. So when issues arose from the reservation process through the transaction and assignment of a vehicle, as the new application went live, the migration team needed to be able to determine the cause as quickly as possible.

"It became apparent that we needed some application monitoring software," recalls Wendy Hamilton, project leader in production support at Hertz.

And after the migration was complete, Hamilton and her production support team still needed application performance management to make sure the Java app functioned well, even as developers continued to add functionality. "Performance problems with the application wouldn't keep Hertz customers from getting their cars, but it could slow down the process and ease when a customer picks up or returns their vehicle," Hamilton explains. "Many of our customers never need to interact with a service counter representative at all. They are notified where their car is located via a text message or email, walk directly to it, and drive away. Due to the sheer number of rentals that Hertz processes, the transaction application must perform at an exceptionally high rate."

Based on the recommendation of the project team, Hamilton, then a project leader with the software development group, sought out a demo of Riverbed® SteelCentral™ AppInternals (then an OPNET product). Now an integral component of the Riverbed Application Performance Platform™, AppInternals makes it possible to see deep inside an application to detect and fix the root causes of performance problems.

"We also wanted a product that would help us to be proactive, based on the severity of the performance issue," Hamilton adds. "Being forewarned about an issue that could escalate to a severe problem would allow us to circumvent the issues, such as switching data centers (from the active to the failover center)."

When Hamilton and her colleagues saw how easy AppInternals was to use, and the wide range of functionality it offered, they decided to buy it.

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Alerts prevent issues, transaction traces identify the causes

With AppInternals, Hamilton's team now has the tools they need to be proactive in their support of the rental transaction application and thus to fix problems before they occur. The system alerts them via email to potential problems. "I'd say that's the main benefit of AppInternals—its ability to alert us when a problem is just beginning," Hamilton says.

Another important benefit of AppInternals is that because it detects the root cause of an issue, it is easier to know who to get involved in the solution. "AppInternals helps us recognize almost immediately which team we need to contact," Hamilton notes. "It saves time in the resolution, because we are confident in passing the issue off to the correct solution team."

They frequently use AppInternals' ability to record and index all transaction traces—from user to the application back-end. This is helpful because the rental transaction application makes a lot of remote calls to other modules and databases. "I can trace transactions using AppInternals and actually see which portion of the rental transactions are causing delays," Hamilton explains.

Hamilton has come to value the AppInternals dashboard as much, if not more, than the other functionality. She has set up the system so that the agents are constantly capturing information (which she says puts no or negligible overhead on application processing), and she checks the dashboard often. "I always have the dashboard up because it gives me a general overview of the performance within the application," she notes.

Hamilton might see something unusual in the dashboard and decide to explore it in more depth. For example, she recently saw a Web service that was taking longer for one of the applications than for another. "We wouldn't have been aware of that as early in the process without the dashboard," Hamilton says. "And when the dashboard alerts us to potential issues, I can use all the other AppInternals tools to figure out what it is."

Ultimately, AppInternals is helping the Hertz team ensure the robustness of the application as well as its ongoing improvement. Since the migration to the Web app, developers have added support for a variety of different devices, including kiosks. With AppInternals, Hamilton and her team are making sure Hertz employees have a tool that keeps everything moving and helps get customers into their cars as quickly as possible.

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About Riverbed

Riverbed, at more than $1 billion in annual revenue, is the leader in application performance infrastructure, delivering the most complete platform for the hybrid enterprise to ensure applications perform as expected, data is always available when needed, and performance issues can be proactively detected and resolved before impacting business performance. Riverbed enables hybrid enterprises to transform application performance into a competitive advantage by maximizing employee productivity and leveraging IT to create new forms of operational agility. Riverbed's 26,000+ customers include 97% of the *Fortune* 100 and 98% of the *Forbes* Global 100. Learn more at riverbed.com.

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