solarwinds

SolarWinds helps realestate.com.au to meet 99.99 per cent uptime targets

When IT professionals in the REA Group began to build a 90 per cent virtualised private cloud to accommodate realestate.com.au, Australia's leading web site for residential property, they chose a range of SolarWinds networking and application monitoring tools to help them. It was a critical project as the site attracts more than 20.4 million Visits a month . But SolarWinds' solutions helped the IT team to meet their 99.99 per cent uptime target and have also empowered engineers to make better informed decisions by delivering new levels of transparency and enabling better systems access.

Customer

REA Group Limited (ASX:REA) is a leading digital advertising business specialising in property. Listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) in 1999, the Group operates Australia's No.1 residential and commercial property websites, realestate.com.au and realcommercial.com.au, as well as the market-leading Italian property site, casa.it, and other property sites and apps across Europe and Hong Kong. Further details about REA Group's activities can be found at www.rea-group.com

Challenge

Having built its own private cloud, the IT team at realestate.com.au sought upgraded solutions to manage the availability and uptime of the corporate network, infrastructure, and applications. Previously they had used old versions of SolarWinds solutions, but these were three major versions behind latest technology and the team was unable to modify them easily.

"We wanted the latest and greatest versions that we could tailor build," said Technology Services Manager, Damian Fasciani.

The technology they chose would be used for monitoring network equipment, as well as 40 virtual servers and 10 physical servers. The corporate environment is a mix of Windows, Linux and OSX. The network serves five offices, two physical data centres and two cloud data centres. There are 100-plus devices, including wireless access points.

Network uptime is critical because none of the infrastructure or servers are located within any of the offices.

"If the network were to go down, our business would come to a halt," said Fasciani. "We have an uptime target of 99.99 per cent."

Solution

According to Fasciani, REA's IT staff already knew that SolarWinds had some of the best monitoring and management products available. Also he and others had used SolarWinds products in previous jobs. So rather than initiate a time-consuming evaluation, the team went straight to SolarWinds solutions, based on their past experience with these.

The company had used other tools, including Nimsoft and Nagios, and they are in the process of de-commissioning Nagios. Fasciani said Nagios was comparable with SolarWinds in power, but SolarWinds was far easier to use and set up quickly, plus multiple SolarWinds solutions came out of the box with a single pane of glass view.

CLIENT STATISTICS

- **3 million web 'hits' per month**
- **99.99 per cent availability target**
- **40 physical and 10 virtual servers**
- **Two physical and two cloud data centres**
- **100-plus network devices**

"The SolarWinds solutions have given us better access and more transparency than ever before, as well as better access to the system. This empowers engineers to make decisions when they need to, based on what they are seeing on the monitors. Before, we pretty much relied on intuition."

For systems management they selected SolarWinds Virtualisation Manager (VM), and Server and Applications Monitor (SAM); while for network management they selected SolarWinds Network Performance Monitor (NPM) and Network Configuration Manager (NCM). They added Web Performance Monitor (WPM) to ensure the health of their critical web site; IP Address Manager (IPAM) to simplify and monitor management of IP addresses; Syslog Server to receive process and alert logs from network devices and Windows events; and Mobile Admin for Agentless IT management and monitoring from any mobile device. Finally SolarWinds Enterprise Operations Console (EOC) gives at-a-glance insights into enterprise network performance.

Results

According to Fasciani, Network Performance Monitor produces a wealth of information, so much in fact that the IT team have added a widget to show only certain types of input. When they need to broaden the application's scope, they simply click through to additional information.

Managing the performance and security of networks, servers, applications, websites, virtual machines and storage devices has never been easier or more affordable. Simply ask SolarWinds what you want to manage and they will guide you to the monitoring or management solution that meets your needs.

He said, "NPM simplifies detection, diagnosis and resolution of network issues. It is good for learning network utilisation. By reporting problems such as packet loss, and by flagging issues so early, it allows us to be pro-active in fixing problems."

NPM also tracks response time, availability and uptime of routers, switches and other SNMP-enabled devices. The solution also shows performance statistics in real time.

The realestate.com.au team use Network Configuration Monitor to back up all switch and router configurations, and have checked its ability to make configuration changes although they had not yet used this functionality.

According to Fasciani, NPM and NCM "do the job well, and most of their areas are fantastic". He added, "We implemented SolarWinds Virtualisation Manager (VM) to monitor our VMware infrastructure in our private cloud, which previously we found difficult, but with VM its plug and play and reconfiguring it was easy and straightforward."

Since the realestate.com.au web site represents the business's backbone, the IT team has made its continuing operation their top priority by supporting a 99.99 per cent network availability target. To achieve this they have multiple strategies and solutions in place. If a front end web server goes down, redundancy is such that it does not affect the overall performance.

Web optimisation is critical, so SolarWinds Web Performance Monitor (WPM) which continuously monitors end-user experience for each step of a web transaction, also plays a key role.

"Optimising the network, systems, web and applications (within our Hybrid Cloud) are all critical to the health of our business, and the SolarWinds' solutions combine to enable us to give us early warning of any developing problems," said Fasciani. "Then our redundancy setup lets us drop a server out of the loop while we rectify the situation, usually before our users are even aware of it."

He concludes, "The SolarWinds solutions has contributed to our record of maintaining 99.99 per cent uptime by giving us better access and more transparency than ever before, as well as better access to the system. This empowers engineers to make decisions when they need to, based on what they are seeing on the monitors. Before, we pretty much relied on intuition."
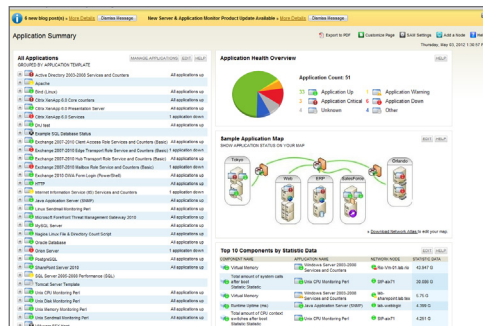
IT Management
Inspired by You.

SolarWinds (NYSE: SWI) provides powerful and affordable IT management software to customers worldwide from Fortune 500 enterprises to small businesses. In all of our market areas, our approach is consistent. We focus exclusively on IT Pros and strive to eliminate the complexity that they have been forced to accept from traditional enterprise software vendors. SolarWinds delivers on this commitment with *unexpected simplicity* through products that are easy to find, buy, use and maintain while providing the power to address any IT management problem on any scale. Our solutions are rooted in our deep connection to our user base, which interacts in our online community, thwack, to solve problems, share technology and best practices, and directly participate in our product development process. Learn more today at http://www.solarwinds.co.uk.

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