

Completing The Picture: Unified View of the Network, Applications and End User Landscape

Customer Story



Industry

Insurance

Challenge

West Bend Mutual Insurance believed it was ahead of the game when it came to managing the performance of its most critical business application — until end users told the company's IT team that the measurements didn't accurately portray their expectations or experiences

Solution

Dynatrace Network Application Monitoring (formerly DC RUM)

Results

- Jump in proactive fixes with alerts to issues before end users are impacted
- Both app and network performance analyzed in real time and from a historical perspective spots negative trends before degrading app performance
- Ability to quantify the value of IT using business-critical data

West Bend Mutual Insurance provides insurance coverage to home, auto and business owners. Over 1,200 independent insurance agents rely on the company to help them package and sell policies, the majority of which are processed online using WestBendConnect, the company's primary B2B application.

Challenge

West Bend Mutual Insurance believed it was ahead of the game when it came to managing the performance of its most critical business application — until the end user expectations and response told them differently.

Business Challenge

WestBendConnect is a key revenue stream for the company and monitoring its performance is a critical top priority. But, while the team's focus on monitoring application performance appeared spot-on, they came to a sudden realization that something in the data was not.

"Our aim was to prioritize our resources, but it turned out that we were making assumptions that were not in line with what end users were experiencing. We were coming up with imperfect priorities," said Scott Grinna, Director of IT Administration for West Bend. "This became evident when we sat down with our end users and said, 'We think we should work on this, and we think availability is that.' Their response was, 'Your numbers are not accurately showing what we're experiencing, and your priorities are not consistent with where we think you should be.'"

That was the missing link: measurements weren't matching up to end-user experience. That is when they really got interested in taking an end-user-focused approach to the problem.

Solution

The team deployed Dynatrace Network Application Monitoring (formerly DC RUM), a network-based solution that delivers the perspective they needed to visualize the end user experience. With this network perspective, they now have a broad view into the largest components of the application delivery chain: the network. They can now proactively see the likely points of degradation affecting end user experience and fix them quickly.

"We had to sit down with the end users and determine which applications and transactions were most important to them," Grinna, explained. "That process alone gave us a better understanding of the business needs. We're now using the same terms end users gave us to describe what 'performance' means, and that's half the battle in delivering better application performance."

With end user expectations in clear focus, the West Bend IT team set thresholds for acceptable performance across 10 key business applications, including WestBendConnect. Using the detailed transactional decode capability in Dynatrace Network Application Monitoring, they are able to visualize all tiers of the application from the data center to end user. Dynatrace passively listens to application traffic on the network and monitors performance against the thresholds defined by the IT team.

When a transaction breaches a threshold toward unacceptable performance, it alerts the service desk who then identifies the issue in the application or the network and escalate it to the appropriate IT team. The built-in fault domain isolation analytics identifies the root cause.

Results

"After implementing the Dynatrace solution we're able to open service tickets before our service desk even gets a call from our end users — so that allows us to get a head start on resolving latencies and service outages before the users might even experience them," said Craig Walker, enterprise architect for West Bend.

Grinna said, "We can look back and say, 'OK, what caused that to happen?' We can look at transactions across web and application servers, middleware and databases, spanning the entire application delivery chain, to quickly find the root cause of the issue."

"Dynatrace transaction reports are also used to plan future upgrades and application deployments," added Walker. "They allow us to prioritize our IT resources in the areas that are of most value to the business and on the transactions that need it most. Dynatrace's application and network performance monitoring solutions have provided us with a very clear tool for communicating between IT and the business unit."



Dynatrace's approach to both Application and Network Performance Monitoring has provided us with a very clear tool for communicating between IT and the business unit."

— Craig Walker
Enterprise Architect, West Bend Mutual Insurance

West Bend's IT department has also found that having greater visibility and insight into the performance of their key business applications helps to better explain and champion the role of IT in the business. The company's CIO has the benefit of using quantifiable business-critical data to illustrate IT activities to other executives. According to Tom Lindell, Senior Vice President and CIO of West Bend, "we've selected five mission-critical applications in each division, and we monitor those on a regular basis. We share reports with each unit on a monthly basis so they can see the service we're providing."

"If you walk into an executive meeting and start showing charts of CPU utilization, you're just going to distance yourself from the rest of the organization," said Grinna. "But if you can walk in and say, 'Business transactions are slowing down by 20 percent and we know why, and here's what we want to do about it,' then it's a whole different conversation."

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