

REMOTE MONITORING STREAMLINES ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS

CLIENT OVERVIEW

The client is one of the leading healthcare companies in the US, with four distinct business segments focused on branded and generic pharmaceuticals, devices, and services. With revenue of over \$700 million a year and over 50,000 employees, access to accurate, secure data was critical.

CHALLENGE

Protect Data while Reducing Operational Costs

Thanks to years of expansion, the client's SQL server environment had grown rapidly, with diverse application uses and owners. After a reorganization, the company's IT director recognized the need to take greater steps to ensure that critical data was protected and access to its application servers was not interrupted. And, after experiencing high DBA turnover, optimizing administration efforts was also at the top of the IT director's list.

The client recognized that implementing database server monitoring would give the organization a better picture of database operations, as well as help streamline administration efforts.

To truly provide a return on investment, the solution had to be easy to install and maintain, improve the stability of the environment without adding additional tasks to an already overburdened staff, and be cost effective. With these requirements in mind, the company contacted Aspect Consulting.

SOLUTION

Implement Proactive Database Server Monitoring

The client chose Aspect Consulting to implement remote monitoring across the organization's database server environment.

Aspect's custom monitoring tool, **Prodativ[®] Watchdog EMS**, impressed the client with its ability to simplify the monitoring process, and eliminate common monitoring pain points. **WatchDog EMS** utilizes a centralized framework, consolidating monitoring and alerting components on a single server. The unique framework...

- **Simplifies Setup:** the tool can connect to any database, regardless of platform, and centralized components greatly simplify setup, maintenance, and expansion to additional servers.
- **Simplifies Alerting:** All alerts are summarized in a single daily email, effectively removing the risk of missing critical issues buried too deeply in an inbox. Administrators can also view alerts via a web-based portal.
- **Eliminates Common Monitoring Pitfalls:** With WatchDog stopped SQL agents or unintended updates to maintenance plans cannot cause undetectable failed backups, and the tool has the ability to trend data and forecast events (e.g, excessive disk space growth) so that you can remediate issues before they occur.

Aspect used the following approach to stabilize the client's environment:

CONDUCT ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT

To begin the engagement, Aspect performed an in-depth assessment of the client's SQL Server database environment. Aspect collected key metrics, identifying databases that were inactive, databases with incomplete or unconfigured backups, and underutilized servers.

The assessment not only prepares the environment for monitoring, but has the added benefit of detecting and closing maintenance gaps, and uncovering opportunities for server consolidation.

OPTIMIZE THE ENVIRONMENT

Using the metrics collected during the assessment, Aspect took the following steps to stabilize and optimize the environment:

- **Archive Inactive Servers:** Aspect identified inactive databases (over 16%) and marked those databases for archive, freeing considerable space.
- **Close Maintenance Gaps:** Aspect identified databases with incomplete or no backup (up to 30%) and worked with the client to configure the appropriate level of backup and recovery, effectively closing unknown maintenance gaps.
- **Consolidate Database Servers:** Using server usage statistics collected during the assessment, Aspect identified underutilized servers and developed a plan for retiring entire servers, then centralized active databases over the remaining servers, utilizing newly freed space.

IMPLEMENT PROACTIVE MONITORING

Once the database environment was in a stable state, Aspect implemented **WatchDog EMS**. As a baseline, Aspect set up monitoring of disk and file space usage, database activity, key performance indicators, and backup and recovery frequency.

BENEFITS

Environment Stability Achieved at an Affordable Price

Robust monitoring enabled the client to realize the following benefits:

REDUCED OPERATIONAL COSTS

Aspect was able to retire databases and reduce the number of servers within the environment by 20%, leveraging savings by reducing licensing costs and energy consumption.

OPTIMIZED ADMINISTRATION

Aspect closed all maintenance gaps, and comprehensive monitoring ensures that missed backups, downed servers, failed jobs, and out of range disk space or file size growth can no longer occur without alerting support staff.

COST EFFICIENCY

Services were less than the cost of a full-time employee, and with Aspect maintaining and extending the monitoring system, the client's existing staff was freed to address more mission critical projects.