

Large Health Insurer Abandons Buy More Hardware Policy, Saves Time & Money

Case Study

Client Info at a Glance

Company: Enterprise-sized Health Insurer



Business Value of TeamQuest: One of the largest health insurance companies in the United States used TeamQuest Performance Software to reduce complexity, increase savings, and make better choices regarding utilization and capacity in its physical and virtual environments.

Buy More Hardware (BMH) was always the answer. Even when the problem wasn't clear, the answer was BMH.

One of the largest health insurers in the United States, this organization needed high-performing infrastructure to support business services and applications. The problem was that their IT department lacked the data and tools necessary to provide it. Without the right utilization and capacity information, the answer was to over-provision everything. Better to waste money than risk poor service quality was the logic. But a BMH strategy was not sustainable.

What's going on here?

Left to their own devices, the IT group used some native Unix tools and a lot of scripts to collect performance data.

"I'd spend half my day writing and fixing scripts, trying to collect data," said a systems administrator at this health insurer. "If we upgraded an OS, an existing script might have to be changed. With regular updates coming from application and OS vendors, it proved incredibly cumbersome to maintain our numerous scripts."

Adding to the complexity, the data was stored in many different places and in various formats. As a result, SAs were doing a lot of screen-hopping in an attempt to analyze issues when they took calls complaining about poor performance. The best the IT group could do was to pull data into Excel to try to analyze problems after-the-fact.

Lacking any real visibility into the infrastructure and how it was being used, the safest answer was simply BMH. The basic capacity plan was to heavily over-provision to compensate for the lack of usable capacity information.

"The beauty of TeamQuest software is the simplicity," said the SA.

Enough is Enough

The IT group at this large health insurer finally got the go-ahead to investigate performance and capacity management tools. The goal was to save time and money with a robust solution that covered heterogeneous physical and virtual environments.

An initial search identified TeamQuest software as a top contender. TeamQuest software could implement a Capacity Management Information System (CMIS) capable of gathering, managing, and analyzing data across a broad range of IT infrastructure. A thorough testing and evaluation of TeamQuest software followed.

In a test environment, TeamQuest software was installed for collecting data from the platforms representative of those that would be found in QA and production. The data was compared to the data collected via scripts to verify the accuracy. TeamQuest software provided far more information – more reliable and usable information – than they'd ever had access to.

Seeing the value of the software in their testing and QA environment, those organizations ultimately installed it on about 200 servers.

After initial testing, TeamQuest software was installed on approximately 100 production servers, broadening the reach of the TeamQuest CMIS. Installation took just minutes per server and the software began collecting data immediately. Little customization was required.

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Early Wins & Significant ROI

“Once the software was operating, we were surprised by how busy some of our key servers actually were,” said the SA. “There were issues occurring in Oracle and WebSphere that we had no clue about. TeamQuest made these stand out like a sore thumb.”

In Oracle, he noticed that he had a lot more headroom available. That opened the door to stacking more applications without sacrificing performance.

On WebSphere, it became possible to provide objective input to application groups as to why spikes in utilization were taking place.

Instead of reacting to user complaints and taking long hours to find the causes of problems, the IT group could notify specific application teams of impending problems so they could resolve them before they affected users.

The software provides performance alerting for automatic ticket generation through the IBM Tivoli Enterprise Console, making the entire operation much more automated.

“The beauty of TeamQuest software is the simplicity,” said the SA. “It collects and manages all the data and the administrator just pulls it up regardless of the OS or hardware platform and regardless of where the data is actually stored. I can drill into problems within a couple of minutes to diagnose the situation and know what happened. I have gained four hours per day in time saved by avoiding laborious manual administration and troubleshooting.”

At one of the largest health insurers in the United States, TeamQuest software usage has expanded to 350 physical servers and 650 virtual servers within the enterprise.

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WORLDWIDE HEADQUARTERS

UNITED STATES

TeamQuest Corporation
One TeamQuest Way
Clear Lake, Iowa USA 50428

OTHER LOCATIONS

SWEDEN
GERMANY
UNITED KINGDOM
MEXICO
HONG KONG

With resellers in many additional countries.

CONTACT US

info@teamquest.com
teamquest.com/about-us/contact-us/

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