

Company: CenturyTel, Inc.

Web Address: www.centurytel.com

Industry: Telecommunications

Location: Marion, LA

Company Overview: Voice and data services provider focusing on serving customers in rural areas and small to mid-sized cities. The company has greater than three million customers in 22 states and annual revenues of \$2.4 billion.



CenturyTel Meets Strict Service Requirements and Prevents Major Service Failure

Telecommunications providers have very strict requirements for the quality of service they provide to customers. Those standards don't just apply to keeping the phone lines open, but also to the internal operations which provide the back-end support. CenturyTel, Inc., a Louisiana-based firm providing voice and data services to more than three million customers in 22 states, uses TeamQuest capacity planning software to maintain the highest service levels.

The company began using three TeamQuest software products — TeamQuest View, TeamQuest Model and TeamQuest On the Web — five years ago. At that time CenturyTel didn't conduct capacity planning. But due to rapid growth, the organization required greater prediction in order to detect problems and eliminate them before they caused trouble.

"I did an extensive study of what was available," says John Barfoot, a programmer who does capacity planning at the company's data center in Marion, Louisiana. "For performing capacity planning across different platforms, TeamQuest was definitely the best."

He started using the software on six servers. He now relies on it to monitor performance and do capacity planning on twenty mission-critical UNIX servers hosting the company's most critical applications, including data warehouse, SAP ERP applications, IBM Tivoli systems management software, and Amdocs Ensemble customer service and billing software.

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Barfoot says he has utilized TeamQuest software to identify several bottlenecks in various applications and to eliminate unnecessary hardware. For example, the company ran SAP on five servers. When he ran a model of the workload on the servers, he demonstrated that it could run on four servers without affecting response time.

“We moved it down to four servers and redistributed the load,” he explains. “The results proved out the validity of the simulation.”

TeamQuest also allows CenturyTel to intelligently compare IT options. Rather than throwing more hardware at a problem, it can examine the effect of shifting workloads among servers or swapping out the processors. Recently, for example, Barfoot used it to evaluate various scenarios for a server in the data warehouse which neared capacity.

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“IT didn’t know which option would be best — getting a new server or upgrading the processors on the existing server,” Barfoot says. “I modeled both scenarios so they could see the pros and cons of each and then make an informed decision.”

One of the biggest benefits, however, came when the company switched from a legacy billing system to Amdoc’s Ensemble billing software. As new hardware came in, hundreds of thousands of customers at a time were being converted to the new software, so Barfoot kept a close watch for any potential problems. Just before one batch of customers switched, he spotted a serious problem that had evaded detection.

“I modeled one of the servers and saw a very significant bottleneck that had fallen off the radar and no one knew about it,” he explains. “We got that corrected the day before the conversion. One director commented that TeamQuest had paid for itself in just that one instance.”

While that is the most dramatic example of a disaster avoided, Barfoot says that modeling continuously helps him avoid potential service issues. While the final decisions on what hardware to purchase or how to allocate workloads lie with the administrators covering those particular areas, he continually liaises with hardware owners and application administrators to assist in their planning. After five years of using TeamQuest to provide the hard data to guide these decisions, he still stands by his original product choice.

“The TeamQuest tool is fantastic and customer service is second to none,” says Barfoot. “You just pick up the phone and immediately you are talking to someone who can help you.”

About TeamQuest Corporation

TeamQuest Corporation is the global leader in IT Service Optimization (ITSO), specializing in Capacity Management software. TeamQuest helps IT organizations consistently meet service levels while minimizing costs and mitigating risks. By combining performance data and business metrics, TeamQuest software enables IT organizations to provide accurate, objective information as input to critical business decisions. Companies around the world trust TeamQuest software to help them proactively improve service delivery and support best practices.

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