Insurance Firm Wards Off Costly CPU Upgrades with Compuware Strobe

CUSTOMER

Southern Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Company

INDUSTRY

Insurance

CHALLENGE

Southern Farm Bureau, in the process of a multi-year consolidation and conversion project, noticed MIPS consumption growing rapidly.

The question was how to pinpoint the source of high consumption in millions of lines of code without eating up more time and effort than IT members could afford.

SOLUTION

Compuware Strobe

RESULTS

- Reduced MIPS utilization and application bottlenecks
- Cut nightly batch-processing time from two-and-a-half hours to 45 minutes
- Kept MIPS usage stable for 20 months
- Deferred hardware upgrades, saving $2 million

Business Challenge

Southern Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Company (SFBCIC), one of the nation's largest property and casualty insurance companies, needed to consolidate data centers and upgrade its operating system from VSE to the OS/390 platform to ensure greater system performance and productivity.

With 2.1 million policies and/or vehicles covered, this was a considerable task, made even more challenging by the corporate goal of improving performance without incurring extra costs. "What we needed was a product to help track down performance issues so we could fix them," says Joey Brown, SFBCIC Systems Development Manager.

One area the company focused on was its nightly cycles of batch processing. Batch jobs are processed after hours to avoid service disruptions during peak business hours, which means the system has to process thousands of transactions before the first user logs on the next day. When you consolidate seven different locations into one data center, more data is moving through the system in the same amount of time, slowing down processing.

"Sometimes we would be finishing our night cycles only 30 minutes before people came to work the next morning," says Jane Sullivan, manager of IT Business Services for SBCIC.

Solution

As a longtime Compuware customer, SFBCIC turned to the mainframe APM solution based on Compuware Strobe. As Sullivan recalls, "Compuware came in with a demo of Strobe and ran it against our live programs. They were able to pinpoint several areas where we could improve performance with a few simple programming changes. And, they did it so quickly. Strobe was up and running in just a few minutes. We saw high value in such little time—that pretty much sold us on Strobe."

Unlike other performance management tools, Strobe drills through the multiple layers of z/OS applications as they execute to spot the exact causes of resource demand.

"Strobe pinpoints inefficiencies down to the line of code. Because Strobe quickly pinpoints what's causing the issue, you don't spend many, many man-hours figuring out where it is. It saved us a ton of time and effort," says Sullivan.

Compuware

Results

SFBCIC began to realize value from the mainframe APM solution almost as soon as Strobe was deployed. First came the batch processing issue. Sullivan says, "When we ran Strobe against our code, our programmers quickly located the problem. Once they made the fix, batch processing went from two-and-a-half hours down to 45 minutes."

Eliminating inefficiencies like these has translated into bottom-line impacts. Prior to the purchase of Strobe, SFBCIC saw MIPS usage growing at an alarming rate. The company was upgrading CPU every six to eight months. Once Strobe was implemented, though, all that changed. "With Strobe, we were able to fine-tune performance and delay our next CPU upgrade for almost 18 months, saving approximately $2 million in hardware and software costs," Sullivan explains.

Today, SFBCIC uses Strobe every day to help find bottlenecks and other inefficiencies in its code. Because Strobe requires no JCL changes, recompiles, relinks or other application instrumentation, and uses low-density technology sampling, IT teams can apply it in both development and testing to eliminate application inefficiencies sooner.

According to Brown, that's part of its appeal. "Our companies are using Strobe in different ways. In some cases, every time a program gets changed, we Strobe it before it goes back into production. In other cases, we use it to troubleshoot applications once issues are identified. Strobe is really the best product we've found to help us respond quickly to bottlenecks and response-time issues and keep our applications up longer."

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>
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Daily usage of Strobe continues to pay off for the company. Since finishing its consolidation and conversion project, SFBCIC has initiated a CPU upgrade only once. "We've been running approximately the same number of MIPS for the last 20 months. With Strobe, we can improve performance and put off other upgrades, saving us today probably close to around another $1 million in costs," says Sullivan.

"To me, it's a no-brainer," Brown adds. "If you can improve your performance, you can contain hardware and software costs. Strobe is the best tool on the market to do that, and we hope to have it in our shop for a very long time to come."

To learn more, please visit: **compuware.com/strobe.**