

Optimized IT Infrastructure Performance Enables First-class Customer Service For Retailers

Any retail or e-commerce company knows that time is money. But the ability to offer first-class service and get the right product to the shelves quickly to maximize profit in today's highly competitive environment requires highly available and high performance IT systems in support of global supply chains and 24-hour order processing.

Downtime is Unacceptable

If time is money, then retailers can literally count the cost of downtime. When their supply chain, e-commerce and store information technology and communications systems fail in today's 'always on' and interconnected world, their competitors are only a few storefronts or website clicks away.

But, just as retail propositions have had to evolve to keep pace with technology developments and customer demand, the legacy IT management and monitoring systems that support them have not. These essential tools are now required to support optimal IT resource usage, availability and service levels of both physical and virtual infrastructures, as well as application performance for superior usage and availability of both physical customer service.

Whether it is the payments processing in-store and online, or the merchandising and analytics systems at head office, response times at the application, fabric and storage layers of a retailer's IT infrastructure can have a big impact on its ability to place supplier orders, sell goods, manage customer queries and, essentially, do business. Yet, simply throwing more bandwidth or storage at perceived issues may not only mask an unrelated, underlying problem, it may also be hard to justify when the current tough economic climate means capital expenditure (capex) is particularly constrained.

Retail IT Infrastructure Must be Monitored

The comprehensive, accurate and ongoing measurement of infrastructure resources and performance can help to give retailers a competitive edge with real-time monitoring that allows them to proactively monitor the health of their IT systems and identify the root causes of potential issues before problems that can affect business as usual occur. Such visibility can also de-risk IT infrastructure investments, meaning that – rather than throwing more money at a technical problem – IT resources can be 'right-sized' to sufficiently meet peaks and troughs of demand.

The VirtualWisdom solution provides the essential monitoring and management visibility retailers require, helping IT proactively identify and troubleshoot I/O problems from the virtual machine to the storage system. It is an innovative solution that lets retail and e-commerce organizations realize the full economic benefits of networked storage and server virtualization, without compromising on end-user and customer service levels. Its comprehensive infrastructure instrumentation and measurement capabilities can be used to speed application response time, increase availability and reduce waste in the IT infrastructure.

Drawing on its deep expertise in Fibre Channel network monitoring, Virtual Instruments has developed VirtualWisdom as the only infrastructure monitoring and optimization solution to non-intrusively monitor the performance of virtualized applications in real-time by analyzing SAN I/O traffic data. With this approach, VirtualWisdom can identify pervasive over-provisioning, as well



“ We are determining the profiles of the applications in use. VirtualWisdom allows you to understand why applications are behaving as they are. For me, it's all about not being reactive, but being proactive to alleviate bottlenecks before we actually see them, then working out how best to satisfy demand.”

Simon Close
Head of Storage
Wm Morrisons Supermarkets

as eliminate application, SAN or storage bottlenecks affecting operational IT systems' performance – all of which can have a profound impact on improving customer service levels, operating margins and, ultimately, a retailer's bottom line. Better tracking of service level agreements (SLAs) in this way significantly helps IT provide superior support of mission-critical applications.

Ensure Regulatory Compliance

In addition to improving system performance, increasing availability, and boosting service levels, VirtualWisdom helps address regulatory compliance and increases revenue generation while enabling cost optimization. Intuitive, visually driven dashboards for all levels of an organization offer the granular detail required by application, infrastructure and IT service delivery teams alongside the summary information needed by functional management heads. This data also complements governance requirements around the data itself, including access control and security, to validate adherence to external compliance standards such as Europe's Basel II or retail's Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) as well as internal SLAs. In short, its comprehensive capabilities can provide the management oversight needed on which to build strong foundations of service reliability, brand trust and customer loyalty.

Enable IT Efficiencies

Retailers also use VirtualWisdom software and hardware to proactively monitor the IT environment and troubleshoot technical issues in order to reduce the instance of helpdesk calls and trouble tickets by up to 80%. With fewer server or SAN storage issues to deal with, the operational expenses (opex) allocated to maintaining business as usual can be reduced and diverted from administrative overhead to revenue generating initiatives. This also has the advantage of freeing up more of the overall IT department's time to more rapidly deploy new technologies in support of bringing new products and services to market.

By optimizing the use of virtualized server and SAN infrastructure investments, retailers can eliminate over-provisioning and plan for peaks in demand around busy shopping seasons. VirtualWisdom finds underutilized resources, enables load rebalancing, and helps IT avoid having to buy servers, storage or switch ports that end up being essentially idle 48 weeks a year. Moreover, by reducing server and SAN storage hardware investments by up to 50%, organizations can also avoid overpaying for management software licenses, as well as data center power, cooling and floor space.

Improve Customer Service

Moreover, while the capex and opex savings enabled by using Virtual instruments VirtualWisdom software and hardware can be used to support more innovative customer-facing products and services, it can also help simplify the move to a private cloud computing-based environment for even more predictable and agile IT spending. Retailers looking at cloud solutions today should prepare to add monitoring capabilities required for tracking SLAs. In addition to supporting higher revenues through accelerated application and SAN deployments and fewer outages, the right infrastructure performance monitoring and troubleshooting solution can also facilitate a risk-free move onto more cost-effective and efficient IT environment.

While IT has allowed this industry to extend its opening hours, geographical supply chain boundaries and customer-facing channels, it has also been put under more pressure to perform optimally and at the lowest possible operating cost. So the ability to monitor, report, trend and analyze performance issues from the application level right through to the SAN storage in a reliable and scalable way is essential for retail IT infrastructures, just as retailers now in turn rely on these infrastructures to maintain their customer proposition and business as usual.

WHY RETAILERS DEPLOY VirtualWisdom®

- Proactively identify and address infrastructure problems before they impact shoppers
- Eliminate the risk of unplanned outages and performance slow-downs when virtualizing retail applications
- Improve application performance to ensure fast order processing
- Maintain and prove SLA/Compliance for Basel II and PCI DSS
- Optimize SAN, server and storage port utilization to avoid unnecessary purchases; divert 50% cost savings to fund revenue-generating initiatives
- Reduce trouble tickets by up to 80%

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